

THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1899.

THE TOWER GARDENS.

CHAPTER XIX.

"OFT IN THE STILLY NIGHT."

"IT'S the mystery, my dear," Mrs. Tildesley of "Crow's Nest," Lambrooke, had oracularly observed to her husband, after Arnold Birkett's first visit.

But, whatever that mystery may have been, it did not prevent Mr. and Mrs. Tildesley from taking a deep and kindly interest in their new friend and his affairs.

Arnold Birkett seemed for a while quite content to follow their advice; so, after much consultation with the husband, he took offices in that newly erected block of buildings, Fenchurch Avenue, Fenchurch Street; and, following Mrs. Tildesley's advice, rooms in Hawthorne Cottage, a picturesque little dwelling within half-a-mile of "Crow's Nest," and not by any means expensive.

"I am throwing nearly all my capital into my business venture," he said to Mrs. Tildesley, when he consulted her about his leaving the Bridgewater; "and as I'm quite alone and don't care for personal extravagance, a quiet little place would suit me best."

So she found him Hawthorne Cottage. These arrangements having been made, Arnold Birkett plunged every morning boldly into the mighty rushing stream of City life, and every evening did his best to rest on his chosen little bit of that stream's quiet suburban banks.

Arnold Birkett came down to live at Hawthorne Cottage in the most unobtrusive way possible, but strange to relate he had not been there many weeks before, quite unconsciously, he had caused something amounting to a stir in Lambrooke; so much so, that it was soon currently reported that, although no longer young, he was running both the curate and the new doctor very close in the interest he had awakened in the local mind; indeed his public was soon a

wider one than that dominated by either of the just-named professional men.

The old rector and his set were interested in him because he held the orthodox views of a good long while ago, except on the subject of African Missions, which exception formed excellent debating ground and prevented the monotony of continual acquiescence; the doctor found him intelligent on fevers and the diseases of the natives; young Tildesley, who lived in one of the turnings off the Lambrooke Road, appreciated his cigars. The men in general found him a pleasant companion and, for Lambrooke, an uncommonly good talker; the women gave him their sympathy, feeling that he was neither well nor happy; the girls declared that he had still fine eyes and a pathetic tenor voice; moreover, it is said (but I hold it to be a libel invented and circulated by a wretched man, whom jealousy had rendered malicious) that some of the unmarried women declared it was too bad of Mrs. Tildesley to allow no one but herself to play Mr. Birkett's accompaniments.

A "small beer chronicle," extending over many pages, might very well come in here, but as any dweller in the suburbs can supply it out of his or her own experience, why should I spend my valuable time upon it? I have said enough to show that had Arnold Birkett been anxious to become a popular man, he could very easily have attained such distinction in the neighbourhood of Lambrooke.

Arnold Birkett, however, cared but little for social success. He accepted it as a right and as a thing to which he had always been accustomed. He was soon intimate with men in every way more desirable than Mr. Tildesley; but he always gave his first friend the preference.

Many residents in Lambrooke competed for the honour of entertaining him, but his fidelity to Mrs. Tildesley remained unswerving. And she deserved his constancy; she was a very nice woman, and took a deep interest in him and his mystery.

When Arnold Birkett had first gone into the City, on his return from Africa, he had often wished that his offices were further away from the Tower Gardens than they were, but he soon grew used to its position, and that too-well remembered place ceased to have any particular interest for him. Fenchurch Avenue, that brand new locality, was so altogether different from any street or lane that had ever existed in the City in his earlier days, that it was at times difficult for him, when there, to believe he was in London at all. In fact, what with the novelty of his surroundings, and the anxiety and excitement of his new venture, he had little time during business hours for unpleasant reflections.

It was after business was over, when at the station he saw crowds of men hurrying away, laden with small luxuries for home consumption; it was when he heard them chatting about wives and children, when going along the Lambrooke Road, he often saw them fondly welcomed

back after their day's work ; it was then he sometimes wished that the earth would open and swallow him up. He never took back anything for himself to Hawthorne Cottage. When he returned he generally lay on the sofa with his face to the wall for half an hour or more, weary, miserable, and alone.

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Trinity Monday was a fine day. It had been bright even among the City lanes, it was brighter in the purer air of Lambrooke.

On Trinity Monday Arnold Birkett returned from town rather earlier than usual. He was not feeling well ; his day in the City had fatigued him very much, and had been extremely exciting to him. So instead of walking back to the cottage, he mounted the local omnibus.

In the state of health he was in just then, anything would have made him melancholy. Doubtless, if he had then had the most loving wife, he would have said or done something to make her wretched five minutes after his arrival at home. He knew perfectly well what was the matter with him, but that did not prevent his being hurt when he saw the wife of the owner of "Inglenook" meet her husband in a front garden where thousands of forget-me-nots were blooming in the borders ; nor from feeling half choked when he noticed many children's small fingers drumming on the nursery windows of "Plinlimmon" to their father, as he descended from the top of the omnibus at his own gate. Little knew the owners of the chubby fingers how they were also drumming on the heart of one of their father's fellow passengers.

Arnold Birkett was suffering from what he called "an attack," although a far milder one than the illness at the Tavistock. He was paying the penalty that most Englishmen have to pay for a few years' residence in the tropics. Nothing on earth could have given him pleasure ; but the quiet domesticity he witnessed or imagined filled him with envy and made him worse.

"The only comfort is," he said to himself, "it can't last much longer. I was a fool to come back at all. I wish that last fever had killed me. The sooner it's all over the better !"

He lay down on the sofa in his little sitting-room as soon as he reached the cottage, and tried to sleep but could not. He had been ill and out of temper all day, every trifle had annoyed him ; several things that were not trifles had occurred ; they preyed on his mind, he could not get rid of them ; he could not get rid of the City, he had brought it home with him ; he seemed still to be hurrying along its streets and lanes. He turned his face to the wall, but the past day would not be shut out ; he was so tired and ill, it was a misery to him to have to move or think, but rest would not come. After a while the scene in front of the grim old Gate of The Dead separated itself from the crowd of other scenes that thronged his mind. He had walked from his office in Fenchurch Avenue to Tower Street, by

Mark Lane, Hart Street, and Seething Lane ; an affair not of much importance, but of an annoying nature, had made him take that route ; that annoying affair had occupied all his thought at the time.

As he had passed the Church-yard gate his eyes and brain had received the impression of what he had seen, but at the time he was too much irritated to take any particular notice of anything, as he had hastily glanced up and then hurried through the crowd.

The special cause of the annoyance was gone now. As Arnold Birkett lay on the sofa with his face to the wall the scene rose vividly before him, bright, clear, full of life and sunshine. It had a strange fascination for him ; and, in his mind, it was accompanied by a sort of shadow in which there were the same grim gateway, and a blurred and misty crowd ; but in the bright fresh picture he had seen that day there was a widow, and in its shadow the remembrance of a *bride*.

Thinking of these scenes, at last he fell asleep. It was the cool of the evening when he awoke. He felt better, turned round to the lonely room, hated the sight of it, resolved to go and smoke a cigar with Tildesley, and to talk over one or two things while so doing.

Abroad, he and the few Europeans near him had been in the habit of "meeting up" of an evening. He was used to society of an evening and did not feel right without it.

He went down the broad suburban road to "Crow's Nest." It was a lovely sunset. He found the Tildesleys sitting out on the lawn, and stayed there talking until it grew dusk ; then they went in and there was the usual little bit of music.

Arnold Birkett had always a pathetic tenor ; that evening, as he sang a well-known ballad to Mrs. Tildesley's accompaniment, his voice was absolutely full of tears. Nothing could have sounded more heart-broken than his refrain :

"Thy face I never see,
Thy face I never see."

Mrs. Tildesley, kind woman, felt very sorry for him, and afterwards remarked to herself that it was highly creditable to him and a thing you don't often meet with, to find a man mourning for a wife who had been dead nearly eight years. She wished very much to speak her mind to her husband on the subject, but forbore. She was a prudent woman—Mr. Tildesley had proposed to her about four months after his first wife's decease.

Mrs. Tildesley's feelings having been aroused by Arnold Birkett's harrowing ballad and tearful voice, followed him by the song perhaps the most capable of stirring up the past of any ever written.

Her voice was good and well trained, but now much of it had gone, and she had the sense to know it had gone. She sang nothing but the simplest songs ; but she gave them with a very distinct articulation and with much simplicity.

Arnold Birkett heard every one of the well-known words she sang ;

they and their lovely melody haunted him, and came only too true that very evening :

"Oft in the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Fond mem'ry brings the light
Of other days around me.
The smiles, the tears, of boyhood's years,
The words of love then spoken ;
The eyes that shone now dimm'd and gone,
The cheerful hearts now broken.
Thus in the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain hath bound me,
Fond mem'ry brings the light
Of other days around me."

Returning to Hawthorne Cottage that "stilly night," "the light of other days" falling full on his life as the moonbeams on the quiet gardens by the road-side, the scene in the City Lane came back to him once more ; but now all was vague and shadowy except one face beneath the dim old portal—a girl's face it was that grew to him each moment, brighter, sweeter, more real—it was the *face of Jessie Bayliss*.

CHAPTER XX.

RETRIBUTION.

ARNOLD BIRKETT'S temper was subject to violent alternations. On the Trinity Monday it had been simply dreadful. Early in the morning, having no one else to insult and abuse, he had cursed himself and his fate very freely. During that day the veriest trifles had irritated him almost beyond endurance ; it seemed that everybody insulted him ; everything annoyed him ; the whole arrangement of the world at large was devised on purpose to spite him ; the universe itself owed him a grudge and was letting him know it.

"Life's too hard ; everything's against me !"

After that song and the quiet walk in the "stilly night," this irritation gave way to a profound yet gentle melancholy. Going up to town in the morning, he listened with so sympathising an expression to a tale of woe that the narrator was emboldened to ask for a subscription, and got it at once. No trifles annoyed him that day, he was very sorry for anyone who was in trouble.

He was, however, in no frame of mind for business. Had he been left to himself he might perhaps have done absolutely nothing for the whole morning. But while he was sitting at his desk, with his head buried in his hands, one of Mr. Tildesley's clerks came in with an exciting message. An article of colonial produce, that had been gradually rising in the market, was moving up rapidly ; the rest of

that day, until five o'clock, Arnold Birkett spent in rushing after it amidst a crowd of eager buyers. The beautiful young face that had come to him in "the stilly night" was driven out of his thoughts, until what seemed to him a sufficient quantity of that article had, with much difficulty, been caught and bought.

Arnold Birkett may possibly have seen enough of Mr. Tildesley during that day's chase; certain it is that he did not return with him to Lambrooke by his usual train. Certain it also is that when business was over, he called the caretaker of the house in Fenchurch Avenue into his office and had a long talk with him, which resulted in their both going upstairs and looking at a couple of very good unfurnished rooms at the top of the house.

"Plenty of light and air here," he remarked. "Well, I'll think of these rooms. It's a long way down to Lambrooke if one is detained in town or if one wants to go to the theatre. I'll think of these rooms. They'll be let reasonably, I suppose; they're too far up for business purposes, and no one makes a home of the City now."

He went down to his office again, wrote a few letters, and then left the place.

The great blocks of offices were all closed when he left the Avenue; traffic was still going on in Fenchurch Street and the main thoroughfares, but the lanes were deserted.

Arnold Birkett passed the gateway of St. Olave's; it was closed. The crowd was gone; the street was empty, the black skulls stared vacantly at the gigantic rainbow-hued letters which, on the high dead wall opposite, announced a popular play.*

He paused an instant, then went through Catherine Court, and so on to Tower Hill.

By Barking Alley he found the old crossing sweeper just preparing to leave for home, like the rest of the City people. A few bonded carmen were still at work on the raised level before the block of warehouses, but for most, even of them, the day's toil was over.

Arnold Birkett felt that he had no right to be there at such an hour. He, like everyone else, ought to be at home or at least going home. Why was he different from everyone else? Why was he not going home? Simply because he had no home to go to. He could not think of Hawthorne Cottage as home. There was no beloved being there to turn his rooms into his home.

He went up to the crossing sweeper and gave her a shilling. Her face beamed with delight and recognition as she curtsied low.

"There's ladies come to Mr. Harbuckle's now, sir," she said in her ghost of a voice.

"Indeed! How many?"

"Three, sir. One which I wouldn't like to say she were igxactly old, and two of the nicest young ladies I iver see."

*At the time this was written, facing the Gate of the Dead was the one word "YOUTH." It was a grim contrast.

"I hope they remember you sometimes," said Mr. Birkett.

"Bless their pretty faces, they do, sir!" she exclaimed with a benign smile; "an' I pray to all the Saints for 'em ivery night, sir, as I've been a-doing for you, sir, since I last saw you. But it's been a bad day for me intoirely, this; folks thinks when it's fine, me and me poor childer don't want nothing; and it's no tayleaves, nor broken bits, nor nothing I'll get from Mr. Harbuckle's now Mrs. Robbins is gone, spite of the pretty young ladies. Sure if it wasn't for the likes of a gentleman like you coming along now and again, I'd be starved."

"Do you happen to know their names?" asked Mr. Birkett.

The woman shook her head and Mr. Birkett passed on, a shower of murmured benedictions following him; while the sweeper was repeating in her heart a few of the soubriquets, quite unfit for publication, by which Mrs. Robbins had been in the habit of designating Mrs. Bayliss.

After he had gone some yards, he furtively glanced over his shoulder, and noticing that the sweeper had departed, he recrossed the road and keeping along the footpath that surrounds the gardens of Trinity Square, was soon opposite John Harbuckle's house.

The door was shut, business there as elsewhere was over for the day. He looked up at the windows; no one was to be seen, but fresh flowers in the window-boxes and fresh lace curtains behind them gave the house a certain home-like aspect it had wanted on the April morning when he had last noticed it.

I say "noticed," because he had since then walked by it many times when his mind had been occupied with other affairs, and when that house had had no particular interest for him.

"That, I suppose, is still the dining-room," he said to himself, looking up earnestly at two open windows on the first floor. "And she, no doubt, is there at this very moment, and I can't see her, I, to whom she belongs!"

He looked at the windows as if they were mesmerizing him.

"She may be there!" He felt indeed she *must* be there.

"Bitterly, bitterly, I've been punished! Is my punishment to last for ever? Is there never forgiveness? Why may I not see her? Why may I not claim her? Is she not mine? My all—now? All that remains to me of the wreck of my old affections?"

He turned abruptly as if he had wrenched himself away with a terrible effort.

"To be so near, and yet, like a dead man, out of sight," he said, as he entered Catherine Court, in which there was then no one else.

He walked up and down for some time in great agitation.

"Ah," he said, "it's a frightful thing to come back from the dead! What shall I do? What can I do? *Now*, she thinks of me as a saint with her mother in heaven. How can I tell her all, poor child? Why did I return? Shall I go to John Harbuckle and tell him all?

I can't! He's too good to enjoy the triumph, but I can't! I couldn't face him! He could forgive me for wronging him, but never for so hurting her! Impossible! I meant to have taken more time to have tried to put myself right with the world first. Shall I go back to Lambrooke? Ah, that old house, and the worn steps, and her little feet! The doorway where she used to watch for me of an evening when all was quiet as it is now. *She* would have welcomed me. *She* would have forgiven me, without one reproach. *She* loved me better than her life, and I killed her! I deserve my fate. Why should I break in upon the happiness of those others? They are happy enough! Oh, yes, they are happy; everyone is happy except me! They have mourned, but they are comforted by this time. Why should I go and trouble them? Let the dead past bury its dead, and me along with the rest."

After he had taken many a turn up and down the court, always looking along Tower Hill, each time he came to the entrance under the worn ironwork he perceived that he had attracted the notice of a policeman. He paused somewhere in the middle of the court and debated for a moment whether he should leave it by the Seething Lane gateway and return to Lambrooke, or whether he should continue watching John Harbuckle's house.

"I must see her," he decided. "It's a sweet evening; between now and nine o'clock they are sure to come out. I must see her face once more, if but for a moment."

He passed John Harbuckle's house again, again looked up at the windows. No one was to be seen. No sound of voices from within could reach him. He went on under the shade of the plane trees, of which the leaves were fluttering gently in the warm western glow, until he came to the gate of the square gardens, where he stopped for some time. Then he came back again, and then again returned to the gate. Not a creature was to be seen in the gardens. If he could only have been permitted to enter and wait on that sun-lighted velvety turf the lengthening shadows were crossing! Surely in all Europe there can be no City so selfishly arranged as is London! London is essentially a town for people who have homes, woe be to the wanderers there! There were plenty of seats within the gardens both of the square and the Tower, but they were reserved for those who had homes, and chairs, and sofas near at hand. Arnold Birkett, and doubtless many others, would have been thankful for the humblest bench outside the railings, but of course there was none; had there been, it is probable that some of the men who were spending their evening (after a long day's toil on the wharves) standing at the corners of the City lanes or at the bars of public-houses, might have taken that bench, which would have been very undesirable. Oh, cruel London town! There was consequently nothing for Arnold Birkett to do but prowl about the square and in and out its courts in the least obtrusive manner he could. This is

a difficult task when it extends over an hour and a half. It was past eight when he at length saw the long-watched door open, and John Harbuckle follow the two girls down the steps.

Only an elderly man with a slow step, and two girls, simply clad in something soft and grey; but after one glimpse of them the houses and trees met before Arnold Birkett's eyes and shut them out again, and then opened, disclosing them, blurred and indistinct. They sauntered in the direction of the Tower. He followed them afar off. They entered the gardens by the gate opposite the bonded warehouses. They went to the bench under the acacias and were lost to Birkett among the trees.

"It is remarkably beautiful this evening," observed John Harbuckle, gazing with calm, contented pleasure and affection on the ramparts and houses by the Beauchamp Tower. "Nothing can be finer! I have advised Mr. Woolcomb's son to make an etching of it from this point of view. He says he will, but has not done so yet."

"Yes, it's beautiful; but don't stay to look at it, please, Uncle John," said Jessie uneasily. "I know it was over there they cut off Anne Boleyn's head. And Alison says some prisoner used to sit by that little slit in the wall and watch the river; and Lady Jane Grey's husband used to walk on the leads of that Beauchamp Tower; and his brother, who married Amy Robsart, was in prison there! Come away! I don't like those things; they make me feel eerie. Let us walk up and down, or go round to the lawn opposite the Mint; I like the docks and the lawn better!"

If Jessie had but seen the eyes that were peering with such painful eagerness through the bushes in search of her face!

John Harbuckle and the girls strolled on slowly along the walk above the moat. Arnold Birkett noticed them moving, and followed them by the path outside the railings. Between them was a deep slope with trees and bushes now in full leaf.

He watched them; they strolled along as leisurely as if by the Birren water, instead of by that ever-flowing stream of London life that was within so few yards of them.

Presently, through a gap among the shrubs, he saw them all distinctly; and then for the moment all around them grew blurred and dark again, the three figures looked to him taller than the White Tower itself, then faded and reappeared.

"Which is she?" he asked himself, and forgetting all else, even his caution, he looked eagerly towards them.

Just then John Harbuckle stopped, raised his hand, and pointed to the one round turret of the White Tower.

They all turned away from the eyes that were watching them, and faced the great pile beyond the moat. All those eyes could see were two plaits of brown hair under two grey hats.

The last rays of the sun were filling the back windows of the brick houses on the historic Green with burning panes, and lighting up the

crowns and pennants of the vanes of the four turrets to most pure gold, and covering the turrets themselves with a bloom like the bloom of damsons. The elderly man in black, the girls in grey, stood almost as still as the glorified buildings.

Did nothing tell John Harbuckle and those girls who was so near? Nothing! He was far from the thoughts of all of them.

John Harbuckle, pointing to the round north-east turret, began to relate, in his somewhat prosy way, the sad story of a now nearly forgotten heroine, Matilda Fitzwalter, of Castle Baynard, who was imprisoned in that same round turret, where, says tradition, she was poisoned, by order of King John, for being brave and virtuous.

As he talked they all went into a summer-house facing the Devereux Tower, at the north-west angle of the inner ward, where the path turns sharply.

They were lost again to the watcher; it filled him with despair.

"Am I never to see her?" he said, looking down to the roof of the summer-house, over which a weeping ash projected like a fan. Beyond was the moat and a great bastion, grim with weather-stains, on which paced a sentry, seen now and again between the battlements; behind the battlements stood the grey tower where Elizabeth's Essex was once captive. It was all nothing to Arnold Birkett. He only knew Jessie was hidden from him.

"I shall certainly go down Thames Street and look up Castle Baynard," said Alison, as John Harbuckle concluded his narrative. "I think I might get a little paper out of that. Wasn't it splendid that her father was the first baron to sign the Magna Charta? Serve King John right!"

"Is it true that King John was all day signing his name?" asked Jessie, with a sort of childish simplicity she affected on these matters. "Because I've been told he was, and I've seen a friend of mine play at it. It was very amusing—my friend was, I mean."

"*You* are very amusing!" said John Harbuckle, with a pronounced smile.

"King John's been whitewashed, you know!" he went on. "But I prefer my history in its traditional form; I like my heroes white and my villains black. They buried her at Little Dunmow, in Essex. They put a recumbent statue on her tomb and painted the finger-tips red, as a sign she died of poison."

"Oh, Uncle John, is it true that people's finger-tips turn red when they are poisoned?" asked Jessie, deeply interested in this last detail.

("Are they never coming out?" thought Arnold Birkett, to whom the waiting had now become an absolute torture. "Am I never to see her?")

"Is it true?" said John Harbuckle. "Why, Jessie, you're as bad as the children with the fairy-tales! Never spoil a good tradition, child, by asking if it's true! Always accept it in all its details."

"Well, but I suppose I may ask—I may wonder, mayn't I?—whether she were so extraordinarily lovely after all?"

"A simple, round-faced country girl she looks in effigy, with her hood and wimple hiding all her hair. Now I hold with St. Paul that a woman's hair is her glory," said John Harbuckle.

"Oh, beauties are frauds!" said Alison. "Confess, Uncle John, you never saw one!"

"Indeed, Alison, I can confess no such thing."

"Oh, dear Uncle John, that *is* good of you!" cried Jessie, with enthusiasm.

"When I was a young man, girls, all girls used to seem to me most beautiful and wonderful creatures!" said the old bachelor.

"Oh, Uncle John, how sad to think they've now grown commonplace!" exclaimed Jessie, who was becoming more and more interested in this subject.

"Commonplace! No, Jessie. *Now*, I think girls, that is, *nice* girls——"

"Like Alison and me, for instance——"

"That is, nice girls," continued John Harbuckle, with a deepening smile, "are much more beautiful and much more wonderful!"

"Oh, but not *really*?" asked Jessie with delight and wonder, and then she laughed.

Arnold Birkett heard her, for at the moment there was a lull in the shrill hooting of the street children.

"Good heavens! Her mother's laugh! Let me go—don't let me stop that happy laughter!" he felt; but he could not stir from the spot.

"I mean it really, Jessie!" returned John Harbuckle.

"That is very charming! I'm so pleased!" said Jessie, the brightness of her smiling eyes dimming with a soft haze as she, with a slight blush, turned away from the others and gazed dreamily over the moat to the lights glowing in the dark embrasures of the bastion opposite.

"Am *I* beautiful and wonderful to Mac Carruthers, I wonder? Surely I can't be *really* beautiful! I'm only pretty. But perhaps—perhaps—— Ah, it would be very nice if Mac were here! Poor Mac! I wonder—I wonder very much—I should like to know how much I would give if I could only know that Mac is really as fond of me as he says he is! Can he think me really very beautiful and wonderful? Imagine anyone's thinking me wonderful! Perhaps Mac does!"

Arnold Birkett, standing without, saw a small street arab take up a stone and aim it at the summer-house; he could have stopped him, but he did not.

That stone brought them all out. They looked up to the railings, but the rascal was gone. Arnold Birkett had stepped back a foot or two; they could not see him—a couple of day labourers hid him

from them—but he, looking down, saw distinctly, and knew which was Jessie.

"Her mother! Her mother over again! Her mother—and me!"

His heart cried out to her to come to him. She never heard it.

She and her companions turned and went on their quiet way along the Tower Gardens.

He saw Jessie look up into John Harbuckle's face and smile as she spoke words he himself could not hear. That, too, was hard to bear.

"It is my due, my punishment!" said the watcher. "I took away his Jessie from him; now he has mine!"

He followed along the upper path outside the rails; the others were many feet below.

He followed them until the sloping bank between them grew narrower.

Should he, having seen her, having known she was safe and happy, go back to Africa, leaving her in peace to cherish his memory as doubtless she now cherished it?

Would she be happier if she saw him? Should he bring her misery? Should he wait for John Harbuckle and tell him all? The impulse to make himself known balanced so evenly the impulse to slink away and hide himself for ever, what could he do? And yet he followed them, with his eyes never moving from Jessie.

The little group paused again for a few minutes just past the fragments of old London Wall that support a very commonplace pump. It is exactly opposite Liquor Tea Warehouse, at the entrance to Postern Row; it marks the eastern boundary of the City. In old maps you may find a postern gate there; and beyond the open country.

The pump formed a screen for Arnold Birkett. He stopped and, looking down, saw, on a sudden, a little scene for which none of them were prepared.

A young man in a brown tweed suit sprang quickly across the road from the opposite path of Trinity Square and dashing past him halted a few feet further on exactly opposite the little group Arnold Birkett was watching.

The young man caught hold of the railings and whistled.

The sloping bank of the Tower Gardens was narrower at that point; it was but a few feet below the road.

Jessie turned round sharply. Arnold Birkett saw her face change—grow radiant. "Mac! Mac!" he heard her cry.

"Can't I come to you? Where's the gate?" exclaimed an eager voice, young and manly.

"Oh, Mac, how did you come? I can't believe it's you! How did you come?"

"I just came by the London and North Western," returned Mac.

"I say, I must get in! Where's the gate? I've news—news—news!"

"Up there—up there! Keep along by the railings. Uncle John, the key! I'm coming, Mac! Keep along by the railings! I'm coming!"

And Arnold Birkett, standing there, saw the young man hurrying along by the upper path and Jessie by the lower.

The path diverged. Mac and Jessie had to move at every step further apart before they could meet at that gate by the Dock House, near which John Harbuckle had heard the voice of the man in the cab on April 7th.

Arnold Birkett watched them; he saw John Harbuckle watching them too; he saw Alison take her uncle's arm; but the meeting of Mac and Jessie was hidden from him by the leafy trees.

Arnold Birkett saw Jessie no more that night.

John Harbuckle and Alison turned, arm in arm, towards the Devereux Tower; Arnold Birkett slunk back again to Lambrooke.

CHAPTER XXI.

FROM THE DOVE'S TWILIGHT TO THE RAVEN'S.

"No, no, Mac! Come away from here, they'll stone us! they will indeed!" were Jessie's first words, when she had opened the gate of the Tower Gardens to Mac, who at once tried to seize both her hands and would doubtless have kissed her, had she allowed him to do so.

It was the gate by the docks, opposite the Royal Mint, where a guard of soldiers was on duty.

"Stone us! What do you mean?" asked Mac, immediately suppressing all signs of affection, and walking on quickly by Jessie's side.

"I saw them do it the other evening," said Jessie nervously. "You don't know what the people about here are like! If they see a decently dressed man and woman talking ever so quietly together in these gardens they'll stone them! It enrages them so! Here—here's a little path where they can't see us! We shall be safe here. Oh, Mac!—oh, Mac!—you've frightened me a little! Don't you think you should have sent a telegram if you couldn't write? There's an arbour at the end of this walk."

"Darling!—how you're trembling! Take my arm! I've done wrong—forgive me—I wanted to tell you the good news myself, I was jealous even of the wires! Jessie! you *are* all right again now, aren't you?" said Mac, with a curious mixture of anxiety and delight in his tone, as he placed her hand more firmly on his arm.

"Yes, yes! It was only for a moment! I'm all right, and so

glad!" said Jessie, in a more natural voice. "I was frightened, Mac; a few days ago aunt and I were frightened, and—I'm so silly, I haven't quite got over it. Your note this morning was so miserable. Nothing told me you were coming, and yet I've been thinking of you all day."

"You have? Bless you for it! I didn't myself know I was coming until this morning. Then I felt I must be my own messenger, I couldn't let anything else tell you. Jessie, I've got an appointment! At last I've got something to do."

"Mac!"

Mac felt that after all he had been right in telling her himself. He was sure that as long as memory lasted he should never forget her face, her voice, as she uttered that one short word; it was to last for ever.

"Jessie!—it's true, darling!"

Then he could not for a moment speak another syllable; neither could she.

They took a few steps in silence.

"What is it?" presently Jessie asked, as if it were, as indeed it was to them, a very solemn question.

"It's Alec's doing. Alec has been blowing my trumpet all round Birrendale; and at last to good—I hope to good—effect. But it's a rather complicated affair; the whole thing I mean. Oh, Jessie, if you only knew how many thousands of years it seems since we parted at that wretched station! If you only knew the blackness, the darkness, the blank emptiness of everything after you were gone!"

"I do know a little," put in Jessie, with a sigh that had as much of pleasure as of pain in it. "You haven't been here, you know!" she added quaintly.

"And the misery of waiting and waiting, and asking and begging for work, and getting nothing, and feeling as if the world didn't want you and wouldn't let you live—Oh, it's horrible! horrible! Thank God, it's over now!"

"But you're not telling me what it is, dear! About the appointment? Poor Mac! your letter this morning almost made me cry, it did indeed!"

"You sweet child! But I didn't know then—not when I wrote yesterday; I only knew last night—after post time."

"Can't you tell me in three words?" said Jessie impatiently.

"You remember to have heard of Donaldson of Langdyke; I'm to be his secretary," said Mac hurriedly.

Jessie, whose fancy during the last few minutes had been soaring mightily, felt rather disappointed. In spite of Mac's excitement, the news when it came fell flat; and Mac knew that it did.

"Secretary! That isn't much, is it?" asked Jessie.

"Well, perhaps not in an ordinary way," said Mac, slightly hurt; "but there are circumstances that make this a first-rate opening."

You see what a young man really wants is an opening; and heaven knows how difficult it is for him to get one! Especially when he has no father to push him on—and when he's failed in his 'exams,' as I have. Alec and I think it's a splendid opening. My uncle does too, I know, and that's the reason he doesn't like it. This morning he gave both of us rather more of his mind than we cared to have. I'm not sorry I'm leaving Muirhead, I can tell you. I've had enough of it lately; rather more than enough."

"He doesn't like me: I feel sure he doesn't," said Jessie. "Poor Mac!"

"Poor Mac! not at all!—as if you weren't worth more to me than all and everybody! I have, however, had a good deal to put up with. Don't let's talk about it!—what does it amount to? But as for Alec, words won't express how good he's been; he has worked for me and no mistake."

Now there was a little circumstance that Mac felt he could not quite honourably discuss with Jessie, and Mac was before all things honourable. It was the reason why Mac's uncle was not so particularly well pleased with him just then. There were indeed two reasons. He begrudged Mac his robust health every time he saw him and Alec together; he did not approve of his impecunious nephew getting engaged to Jessie Bayliss, who had not a farthing, when Mac knew very well that for the asking he might have had the hand of a very charming girl who owned a pleasant estate, not a dozen miles from Muirhead, for the improvement and management of which Mac seemed to his uncle cut out by nature. And the young heiress—pretty she was too, only Mac persisted in not seeing her beauty—the young heiress had shown signs of a distinct liking for Mac.

It was greatly to Mac's credit that he did not boast of this; but Mac really possessed a great deal of proper feeling.

"Alec has worked for me, and no mistake," said Mac. "You remember the Dryfesdales, Jessie? Well, Donaldson of Langdyke is staying with them just now. He came over to Muirhead to dinner with them a few days ago. I was at the Johnstones', fortunately; and Alec and he got talking about one thing and another, and as usual my trumpet was blown tremendously. The consequence was he—Donaldson, I mean—rode over yesterday and settled the matter. He's very anxious to have me with him at once."

"I'm afraid you won't like it," sighed Jessie.

"Liking has nothing to do with the matter," returned Mac. "I can put my likings in my pocket now I have you to work for. But I rather think I sha'n't dislike it——"

"Is he young or old?" interrupted Jessie.

"About my own age," said Mac. "Rather older, perhaps."

"And nice?" asked Jessie.

"Nice!" What a term for a man! He was very considerate

and afraid of hurting my feelings when we had our little talk and settled matters. I, at least, felt so, and was grateful; but Alec, who is sharper than I, put another construction upon his manner when I told him of it."

"I should like to know what it was! What was it?"

"Alec said it was his own feelings, not mine he was so tender about. 'What he needs,' said Alec, who really is most uncommonly shrewd sometimes—'what he needs is not a secretary but a master; that's his only chance. I saw him look strange when I told him you'd saved my life. He has an hereditary failing—he's not a teetotaler: but he has just sense enough to know his danger. I'm sure he recognised you as his master as soon as he saw you. The fact is'—this is what Alec told me—'I put the notion into his head; and there's nothing like putting an idea into a man's head if you want to find it there!' That's what Alec said. Between ourselves, Jessie, I really had wondered at the liberality of his offer, but of course I saw it all at once then, and a most delightful feeling of power came over me. I don't know how it is," Mac went on, his matter-of-fact narrative breaking down suddenly—"I don't know how it is, but ever since that day we drove together through the Dale to Allarbie—you and I, Jessie—(can we possibly be the same two?—we can't be!—and yet we must be)—ever since that day I've felt a different being; I've felt as if I had new powers—I can't make it plain—I'm not a metaphysician—I only know I look back upon my old self, my self that used to be before that wonderful——"

"Wonderful?" echoed Jessie dreamily, remembering John Harbuckle's remarks, and the thoughts they had awakened.

"Ay, wonderful!"—and then came wild, half incoherent words from Mac, and strange happy answers from Jessie.

They sat in a rustic arbour, screened from the road by elder-bushes. An arbour as rustic as if the ebbing tide of the great City's traffic were not sounding all around them, as like the noise of the Birren on a calm evening as could be. The brick tower at the north-east angle of the wall, in which Raleigh had shivered through the bitter winters, looked down upon them; all was unheeded—they only knew they were together—and together looking forward to a long bright future to be spent together. Together! Always they were to be together—always that refrain they had heard on the road through Birrendale to Allarbie was to go with them through the longer road of life. "Together for ever—for ever together." Why should the presence of a person, who to everyone else is a very commonplace mortal, make two hearts so very glad?

Well, so it is—so it is!—so it has been—so it ever will be! They were happier now than when they used to play together at Cauldknowe. They discussed their plans; their future grew to their minds so one, so intimately united, to look forward to it was delight.

The flaming gold died out of the windows of the western front; the damson bloom deepened on the roofs of the four tall turrets, the crowns and pennants were hardly seen; the first twilight, that crepusculum of the day the Jews in elder times called "the dove's twilight," grew quiet and sombre. One by one the dove's feathers were changing by imperceptible gradation, while the lights came out here and there in the great fortress.

John Harbuckle and Alison had first been sitting in the summer-house opposite the Devereux Tower. They had, of course, talked a little of Mac and Jessie. Then they had drifted—as was natural to both of them—into antiquities. There was a heap of stones that had formed part of the old wall; they spent a good deal of time in examining them. At last Alison suggested that it was time to look after Jessie.

So they went along the path for a while until it was met by another which descended from the gate opposite the Mint.

At the foot of that path John Harbuckle paused.

"It was over there—on that long walk overshadowed by the dock warehouse—that I first met your Uncle Arthur—Jessie's father," remarked the old bachelor, pointing in the direction he mentioned. "It is rather a curious coincidence, but that path—as you may have noticed—ends in a little wilderness, and in that wilderness there is a grave."

"I have noticed it," said Alison.

"Few things escape you, my dear, you have an observer's eye. We shall be—indeed, I feel you are, a most admirable companion to me, Alie."

"I'm so glad," said Alison; then more seriously she added: "Yes, I noticed the grave, but"—hesitating a little—"it has just occurred to me that Uncle Arthur must have been coming *away from it* on that evening."

"True! I never thought of that before. But these things mean nothing, you know. I think we must be going in."

They went up the ascending path to the little walk screened by shrubs, and so to the rustic arbour. There they found Mac and Jessie were preparing to return, so they all strolled back together to the house in Trinity Square.

"Don't you think, Jessie," said Mac, as they went along, "don't you think I ought to speak to Mr. Harbuckle? I suppose I am not obliged to do so, but it seems the right thing to do."

Jessie assenting, Mac presently found himself in the dining-room with John Harbuckle.

"If things still promise well at the end of six months, might they venture then?" asked Mac, when he had given a little account of his prospects.

"Precarious! Very precarious!" said John Harbuckle; but immediately began devising liberal things.

"I won't allow myself to think it's precarious," said Mac. "I am sanguine of success. Since Jessie has told me she cares for me a little, I feel—I feel—I don't know how to put it—a sort of grasp"—working his fingers rapidly—"a sort of fate-compelling grasp!"

"Yes—yes," said John Harbuckle slowly, and with a long pause between the words, "so I felt once myself. It is right you should feel so—quite right! But your new patient will require a stronger hand than yours. I've known a good many such cases in my time; it is only the pierced Hand with the print of the nails in it that is strong enough to control such a one."

"I know," said Mac gravely.

"Well, I don't suppose we shall quarrel," said John Harbuckle. "I'll do my best for Jessie's happiness, and for yours too."

"They're identical—they can't be separated," said Mac.

"Of course not: I don't wish to separate them," said John Harbuckle. "She's a dear girl; the house will seem rather desolate again without her; but as we must lose her I don't know that we can do better than give her up to the man of her own choice, provided—of course, that——"

"That he can keep her," said Mac. "I think I'm too fond of her to wish to—that is, I won't be rash;—I mean, we both intend to be very prudent."

"Then you have my very best wishes," said John Harbuckle.

"Thank you very much. It's—I'm afraid it's getting late. I must be going directly—if I might speak to her for one minute more?" and without waiting for an answer, Mac went in search of Jessie, who, as it happened, was not very far off.

The "one minute" contained a great many more than sixty seconds; but Mac was returning to Scotland the next morning, so it was very excusable; and of course he had to give some time to Mrs. Bayliss.

After Mac had left him, John Harbuckle stood for some time looking out of the window. The dove's twilight had all gone, the raven's was fast darkening into a summer night.

John Harbuckle stood at the window of that dear room which had always been his nest, musing over the strange fate that had given him the right to speak to Jessie's lover as he had done—to act a father's part to the daughter of Arthur Bayliss and the Jessie of Catherine Court.

There was a gentle pleasure in his heart as he stood there thinking over it all.

He liked to look after Jessie and her interests. He looked out on the raven's twilight and was calmly happy; yet he sighed. He was very fond of Jessie.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TOWER SUBWAY.

IT might have been perhaps a fortnight after Mac's flying visit that one afternoon, as John Harbuckle was leaving his office for the day, no less a person than Mr. Robbins appeared at the hall door, half of which door was already closed.

Mr. Robbins took off his hat ; it had once been John Harbuckle's.

"Good day, Robbins," said his late master ; "how are you ?"

"Very well, thank you, sir ; hope you are the same."

"Yes, I am very well just now. And your wife ?"

"Fust-rate, sir."

"Ah ! I'm glad to hear it. She is now, I suppose, exercising her talent solely on your behalf ? Do you want to speak to me about anything special ?"

"Why, yes, sir ! A little matter of business, if you wouldn't mind."

"Come into the office, then. Well, what is it ?" said John Harbuckle, half fearing an application for a small loan.

"The fact is, Mr. Harbuckle, my knowledge of the harts, isn't, as you may say——"

"You've made a mistake or two in your purchases ? We've all done that, you know, in our time."

"It's a drawback, when your funds is limited, sir, as I found."

"Just so," remarked Mr. Harbuckle, feeling the application for the loan coming near. "I warned you that it was a hazardous attempt."

"Yes, sir ; but 'once bit, twice shy,' says I. So I thought perhaps you wouldn't mind helping me with a little——"

"Give it up at once, Robbins. Give it up !"

"Oh, it wasn't about money, sir," continued Robbins, in a more lively strain. "But, you know, my brother William ; he and his wife, they're caretakers of a house in Fenchurch Avenue, one of that big new block—and a fine thing, too, it is for them ; and if you should hear of something similar, me and Mrs. Robbins would be obliged to you for thinking of us ; for we're not doing much in the second-and line. But, as I was saying, this brother of mine, sir, have got a party in his house that's taken the top floor, which is what not many people care for, because of the up and down, and the height ; but, as I was saying, this party've took the top floor, and I don't blame him neither—fust-rate rooms, and air like the sea-side. And says I to my brother William, when he told me, 'Jim,' says I, for we always call him 'Jim,' it's a way we've got into ; 'Jim,' says I, 'you be on to that party about antike furniture ; Queen Annie, Loo Cartorse, and cetera,' says I. 'There's money in that party, d'ye see, and I'm equal to a good commission.' So my brother William he goes at

the party, and he works him beautiful! Be-eautiful, sir!" And Mr. Robbins's face glowed with appreciative delight and fraternal pride.

"Talked to him, sir," he went on, "about how things was all changed now, different from what they used to was in the days the party remembered, for he's been for years in foring parts, and it appears don't know nothing of 'igh art and suchlike—so he talks to him, does my brother William, all about the vulgarity in these days of buying furniture out of shops, and what bargains you can get second-and, if you only know where, and all that; in fact, sir, he just showed him the way he should go—like a father, sir. Oh, it was beautiful!—be-eautiful, the way he took him in, and——!"

The loan having retired into a dim future, Mr. Harbuckle fully entered into the spirit of Mr. Robbins's narrative and smiled a most encouraging and sympathetic smile.

"But now, sir, here's the rub! We must go straight with that party, mustn't we, sir?"

"Certainly, Robbins! Most decidedly!" said Mr. Harbuckle with energy.

"The very words I knew you'd say, sir! And right he shall be, if I can keep him so. What I've come to you about, Mr. Harbuckle, is to make sure that whatever he gets from me it's the genuine article, and I'm blest if I always know one from t'other myself. But no duffers for him, sir, it won't do! It'd be dead against my own interests!" said the ingenuous Robbins.

"Very true! Very true! Then you want to show me something?"

"If you wouldn't mind, sir."

"Where is it to be seen?—at your place?"

"No, sir, it's across the water. In one of the streets behind Pickle-Herring Wharf. If you could oblige me with your opinion this evening, sir——"

"This evening? Let me see—this evening?" said John Harbuckle, as if trying to remember what previous engagement he had made.

"And what is it I'm to look at?"

"A sideboard, sir."

"Of what period?"

"That's where I lose myself, sir!" said Robbins, shaking his head. "It's like that one we did up for young Mr. Jackson when he was going to be married."

"Is it? Then I'll go over this evening after dinner. What do they want for it?"

"A song, sir; party as 'as it's been better off, but's rejuiced; wants to part with it on the quiet."

"Pickle-Herring Wharf! Is there time to get over there before dinner, I wonder?"

"Why, bless you, sir, 'twouldn't take you no time to get there by the Subway!"

"To be sure! I never thought of that. All right then, Robbins, I'll go over at once."

"Thank you, sir, very much obliged. Then I'll call again in an hour?"

"Yes, I'll be in by that time."

"Thank you, sir," and Mr. Robbins moved to the door of the office after he had given him the address.

"Robbins," said John Harbuckle, slightly raising his voice, "I think I'll send you a card. You'll get it first thing in the morning."

"Well, sir," acquiesced Robbins, with evident reluctance.

"Yes, I'll send you a card," repeated John Harbuckle.

"Very well, sir, and thank you! Good evening, sir," and he departed.

"Pore old chap! Well, I'm blest! 'As it come to this already?" he soliloquized, on his way along Trinity Square.

But householders may not perhaps think too harshly of Mrs. Bayliss's known objections to the visits of old servants, neither may they think her brother foolishly weak for taking these objections into consideration. It was one thing for John Harbuckle to see Mr. Robbins in the office, and quite another to allow him to call after business hours. This was a nice distinction that Mr. Robbins saw but did not appreciate.

"It is always as well to avoid domestic complications, if possible," said John Harbuckle to himself; and he sighed a gentle, regretful sigh, as he felt that he could thoroughly have enjoyed a good rummage in his den with Robbins, with Robbins who knew his little ways so well.

"One cannot have everything," he continued, as he left his home and turned towards the river. "And the girls are a great comfort to me. I almost wonder how I could have lived and been—well—yes—in a way—happy—certainly comfortable, without them. By-the-by, I might have asked Alison to come with me now. She would have liked it. Shall I return for her? No—perhaps not. Mary would say, with much justice—although she's never been there herself—that the Tower Subway isn't a nice place for her Alison to go through, even with me."

Occupied with suchlike reflections, he came, nearly opposite the gate of the Tower Gardens, to a sort of kiosk, the roof of which covered the top of a spiral staircase; a shabby, much-used, corkscrew-looking affair, by which he wound down and down, until he was many feet below the level of the Thames.

It was about the time when the dwellers on the Surrey side, who work all day in the City, return to their homes. Among these are a number of young men and women, many of whom belong to a class popularly known as "'Arry and 'Arry's young woman." Their day's work being over, these young persons, whose vivacity is irrepressible, happily for them, clatter down that corkscrew, which magnifies the

slightest sound, and perhaps you may form some faint idea of the noises that deafened John Harbuckle as he laid down his halfpenny on the toll-table at the corkscrew's base. Before him a long tube, lighted here and there with jets of gas, stretched away into a dim and apparently endless distance. Through this tube ran a foot-path so narrow that only one passenger at a time could tread it. This path ran between two low banks, such as are, or were some time since, to be seen in the cabins of penny steamboats, and on to one of these banks a passenger coming from the opposite end must needs mount if he wished to pass the occupier of the path.

"Of course, it is very wonderful that I should be walking underneath the Thames," said the refined old bachelor, as he plodded on in the immediate wake of a gentleman who, having either taken much more than was good for him, or being affected by the heat of the day and the peculiarities of the subfluvial passage, was lurching unpleasantly. "Modern science is a glorious thing, I'm very fond of it; but I think I'll go and look at St. Saviour's presently, and return home by the bridge."

At length, and not before he was tired of the tube, he arrived at another corkscrew, where there was more 'Arry and 'Arriet, and where he found it necessary to assist the gentleman who still preceded him.

The open air was indeed delicious after this little trip through the infernal regions.

He walked for a few minutes among the wharves.

"That's fine! That's worth coming to see!" he presently exclaimed. "I'll point that out to young Woolcomb. I never noticed that before! Very fine!"

These remarks were called forth by an opening between the enormously high warehouse walls, a mere slit in their darkness, but revealing and framing a most charming little upright picture of river, shipping, and opposite shore.

"Yes, young Woolcomb should come over here! By the way, young Woolcomb's a nice fellow! I should think Alison would be interested in young Woolcomb; I'll ask his father to bring him some day."

(Oh, wicked John Harbuckle! and here I may as well say, as I do not wish to have to refer again to the subject, that old Woolcomb did one day bring young Woolcomb to the house on Tower Hill, and that Alison found old Woolcomb a much more interesting companion than his son, which was unfortunate; perhaps, as there happened to be a Mrs. Woolcomb already, a chronic invalid, certainly, but who was likely to see them all out; not, I suppose, that that made the slightest difference to Alison, who never thought of these sort of things as applying in any way to herself; but, as she remarked to Jessie after that visit, it only proved that a man can't possibly be an interesting companion until he is at least forty, after

which age he goes on progressing rapidly, if he is of the progressive order, which is not invariably the case.)

But to return to our bachelor.

He found the house, the sideboard, and its "rejuiced" owner, and then turned his steps towards St. Saviour's, at the foot of London Bridge, remarking, as he did so, that the sideboard, though genuine, was not a good example of its style.

Then a neighbouring church clock struck.

"It's later than I thought; I must, I'm afraid, return by that dreadful Subway, there's no time for the bridge," said John Harbuckle.

So again, and with great reluctance, he descended the corkscrew, paid another halfpenny, and re-entered the tube.

He walked on along the narrow path, coming gradually up to a gas-jet, passing it, going into semi-darkness, approaching the light again, again going out into the hideous gloom.

Figures of passengers, now and then, loomed out from the distance, came nearer, passed a jet, mounted the ridge of the iron tube beside him, and were lost.

It had a singularly weird effect.

John Harbuckle noticed it, noticed it several times.

When he was more than half through the Subway and had just passed a gas-light, he observed, coming into sight, the figure of a tall man of an altogether different type from any he had yet met.

In the Tower Subway a tall man is obliged to take off his hat. This man had taken off *his* hat.

John Harbuckle and the tall man advanced towards the next gas-jet from opposite directions.

By the light of that jet they saw each other distinctly.

They met—within a foot or so.

Then the man with his hat in his hand stepped aside on to the ridge to John Harbuckle's left and passed on.

John Harbuckle turned, for him, sharply. The tall man who carried his hat in his hand was already vanishing into the dimness.

John Harbuckle followed him.

The man's steps were longer and quicker than his; John Harbuckle hurried after him.

By the next jet the man stopped, turned, and waited for him.

The old bachelor went up to him, and, laying his hand firmly on the other's arm, said, with a quiet arresting decision in which was no shade of doubt:

"Arthur Bayliss!"

"John Harbuckle!" returned the man; and his voice was the voice the old bachelor had heard and recognised that night he had mused so long and earnestly in the Tower Gardens.

(To be continued.)

IN MEMORIAM.

1879-1899.

"The corpse of the Prince Imperial leaves with an escort for transport home."—Cape Town, June 2nd, 1879.

HOME!—With no smile upon the marble face—
He left that in the long grass where he fell:
The cold sea bears the light form's tender grace—
The land will greet him with a funeral bell.

Home!—Seventeen death-wounds in the bare brave breast,
On which beside lies stain'd a tress of hair:
Can even love dare say it is not best
Though soldiers' eyes grew wet to see him there?

The banner'd Eagles over him may lie,
The cross—the sword—wreaths wan with ocean foam:
But he—white-robed with immortality—
Comes not by land or sea: he went straight Home.
C. E. MEETKERKE.

TWO MODERN INSTITUTIONS.

DEDICATED TO WHOMSOEVER THE CAP FITS.

BY DARLEY DALE.

I. MODERN MOTHERS.

THERE very frequently arises in these latter days a great outcry about the danger of the extinction of some of our native birds. The great auk is gone, the golden eagle, we are told, is going, and many other genera are threatened; but while ornithologists are lamenting over the gradual disappearance of certain birds, a greater danger looms before us.

The Prime Minister has recently told us of decaying and dying nations, but this is not the dread calamity to which we refer.

Is the coming century to witness the extinction of the oldest of institutions, the tenderest of relationships, the holiest of ties? Are mothers, among other old-fashioned things, to be improved away? By modern mothers we mean the middle-aged mother of modern daughters, as well as the young up-to-date mother of young children. The mother of modern daughters is threatened with extinction; her influence is gone; her occupation is gone; her position is going; soon her place will know her no more.

What do modern daughters want with a mother? They need no chaperons, the bicycle has put them well out of the reach of any such old-fashioned encumbrances. They need no advice or guidance. They are already, even in their teens, far in advance of their mothers in their knowledge of the world and its ways, and when their university course is completed, they will know everything, except their own ignorance of what only experience and their mothers can teach them, and to these last they will not listen. They need not the companionship of a mother; they have careers which take them away from home; they preach, or they teach; they lecture, or they nurse; they become lady-milliners, lady-dressmakers, lady-doctors, or lady-gardeners; they keep an afternoon-tea shop, or they go on the stage; they come out as public reciters, singers, violinists, or pianists; they become artists, novelists, editresses or journalists, typewriters or clerks, sisters of mercy, lady-helps or lady-cooks, politicians, captains in the Salvation Army or deaconesses, or they busy themselves with social questions.

In one and all of these various avocations of modern daughters, they are quite independent of their mothers, and go their own sweet ways, filled with a sense of their own importance.

Some mothers, wise in their generation, bribe their daughters to stay at home, by handing over the housekeeping to them, and retiring from active service very much earlier than they wish themselves, because in this restless age some scope must be given for the energy of modern girls.

Even those who are content to do without a career, require as much amusement in a week as would have sufficed their mothers, at their age, for a season. A bicycle is of course necessary to their existence; a lady's club is becoming so. Golf, cricket, even football, are now added to the list of feminine amusements, and what with balls, theatres, concerts, garden-parties, afternoon-teas, gymkhanas, at-homes, club-meetings, tournaments, hunting, etc., their time is pretty well filled up.

Some modern daughters find time to superintend their mothers' reading, and see that they do not get hold of too *risque* a novel, and this is not a duty, self-imposed though it be, that they are inclined to shirk.

Even in writing of the mothers of modern daughters it is difficult to give them their proper place; they are overshadowed by their daughters, and compelled, in the slang of the day, to "take a back seat." One often wonders why the mothers submit so meekly to the new régime. Is it because, endowed with that prescience of coming events in the lives of their offspring, which is one of the gifts of motherhood, they foresee the nemesis of life which awaits these daughters, when they in their turn become mothers of grown-up daughters; or is it that all but divine patience, which is one of the graces of maternity, that enables them to endure to be thus dethroned and set aside?

But though the position and influence of mothers is a diminishing quantity in the economy of the age, the mothers themselves are as necessary to the existence of these same daughters as they were in the days of Eve; they cannot be dispensed with entirely.

When we come to consider the modern mothers of young children, we see the results of modern education and the kind of mothers revolting daughters become, and we see no improvement on the old order, but rather grave deterioration in matters of vital consequence, and a great deal of attention to detail in things of little moment.

We see smart nurses in white dresses which are *de rigueur*, to whom most of the first duties of young mothers are delegated. We see nursery governesses, French or German by choice, so that the children may pick up a foreign language easily, to whom the superintendence of the next stage in child-life is confided. We see nurseries furnished on the newest sanitary lines, papered with pictures from the Christmas numbers of the illustrated papers; we see mechanical toys, one of which costs as much as all the toys we ever possessed: trains which go by electricity on lines and draw up at real stations, not at the sofa or daddy's chair as in the days gone by; we

see horses and carts which go by clock-work, dolls which walk and talk, and dolls' houses luxuriously furnished and perfect models of modern homes; and we see picture-books which are real works of art.

We see children, thanks to Miss Kate Greenaway, dressed in the quaintest of old-fashioned clothes in the most æsthetic colours; tiny baby-girls in little Dutch bonnets, holding up their little skirts in imitation of their great grandmothers, on whose gowns their own frocks are modelled, and their little sailor-dressed brothers pushing them about, or being pushed by them in mail-carts, a delightful invention of modern times.

In all these external ways the children of modern mothers are certainly better off than their mothers and grandmothers were; but when we come to things of deeper moment, and we by no means despise those of less importance, do we find the same improvement?

Our better sanitary arrangements certainly ensure better health for our children; but when sickness comes to them, have they the same loving care that mothers of old used to bestow on their sick children? They may be as well nursed, but it is generally by a trained nurse, who is often a ministering angel; but then a mother's love is more than angelic, it is divine in its tenderness.

The up-to-date society woman too often resents the advent of a tiresome baby, which has spoilt her London season from the very first, and cares nothing about it till it reaches an interesting age, when, if it is pretty and amusing, it is brought forward and shown off to flatter its mother's vanity, and to its own great detriment.

The craze for amusement leaves a frivolous woman with very little time to visit her nursery; hence those early lessons, which make so deep an impression on a child's mind, that used to be instilled by the mother, are now left untaught or taught by hired lips.

There is a complaint frequently made that there are so few children nowadays; but the reason is not far to seek, it is because there are so few real mothers, if the accusation is a just one: it is not the fault of the children.

But all young mothers are not modern mothers in the bad sense of the term. There are, happily, many who, while giving their children all the advantages which modern life affords, do not forget that there are other more sacred duties to children, which only a mother's love can faithfully fulfil.

Neither are all girls revolting daughters, there are still many who, in an age characterised deeply by irreverence, retain a reverential love for their mothers, who still find a mother's advice of more value than all they learn at Newnham or Girton, who still find time to drive or walk with their mothers, even at the cost of a little self-sacrifice on their part.

Nevertheless, though we may not all be guilty of the faults of the age, which are undeniable, the faults of an age are only the most

prevalent faults of the individuals living in that age, and there is certainly room for improvement in some modern mothers and daughters.

II. MODERN AMUSEMENTS.

"ALL is vanity and vexation of spirit," said the Preacher, in the days when cricket and football were yet unknown, tennis and golf unthought of, cycling and gymkhanas unthinkable, though men sometimes drove furiously, and women tied their hair and painted their faces then as now; and if the mothers and daughters of Israel gave afternoon or evening parties, the sackbut and psaltery, the harp and dulcimer accompanied the singing-men and singing-women of those days instead of the piano and violin, the guitar and banjo of to-day.

Pleasure, however, is a coy damsel. Seldom if ever found by him who seeks, but lurking in corners and byways to surprise him or her bent on errands of mercy or going where duty calls; and amusements are often far from amusing to those who pursue them most eagerly.

But a truce to the Preacher! Amusements, if not pleasure, society must and will have, whether pain or pleasure be the fruit of them; and amusements it has from noon till midnight, from midnight till dawn, when it takes a few hours of repose till the weary round begins again.

It is not to society in the strict sense of the word that this craving for amusement is confined. All classes are a prey to it, from the gutter urchin who looks forward to the football-match each Saturday afternoon as the one bright spot in his sorry little life, to the millionaire who, when laid low by illness or accident, will have an electrophone connecting his sick-chamber with all the theatres and music-halls, so that he can make a tour of the entertainments of the city while lying in his bed.

Our amusements are of course governed by fashion, that is just as capricious and tyrannical a ruler in this matter as in dress, and it is the fashion just now for women to patronise the same amusements as men, to play the same games, to follow the same pursuits, to go to the same places of entertainment.

With a consistency wholly foreign to their nature, women having succeeded in following most of the occupations of men profitably, have of late years seen fit to carry that sincerest form of flattery, which has possessed them so powerfully for the last century, imitation, into the realms of sport, athletics, games and amusements of all kinds. A tacit consent has drawn the line at boxing and prize-fighting up to the present, but after a course of drill under Sandow, which is one of the latest flights of fancy of the dearest of creatures, it is impossible to say how soon that boundary may be overstepped; the body we know acts on the mind, and with a portentous development of muscles, the desire to exercise them may be created.

At present, fencing seems to satisfy the war-like aspirations of the daughters of Eve, and the foils are just now as much in request as golf sticks with society girls. At the pace we are going, the Czar's peace proposals seem more likely to end in the establishment of a feminine army than in disarmament; already there are some very pretty lady fencers, and a few tolerable shots, and now that modern women have learnt to fire a gun for sport without screaming and to handle a broadsword for fun without shrinking, who shall say how soon she will yearn to do both in grim earnest?

Fencing is a very graceful amusement and one against which there is little to be said, but it is open to question whether the woman who has so far triumphed over feminine softness and timidity as to be able to take pleasure in winging a partridge or shooting a pheasant is to be congratulated on the victory she has gained.

Man is a long-suffering animal. He has borne with much equanimity the feminine invasion, of what he formerly flattered himself was his own peculiar territory; in the more serious walks of life he has bowed, if not gracefully, still with the intention of recognising the fitness of aspirants to fame and fortune, in the professional and academic, the civil and commercial worlds.

In the world of amusement he has been most magnanimous; he welcomed women warmly into the lawn-tennis courts; he sanctioned readily their entrance into the golf-links; he smiled good-naturedly at their efforts at cricket; he laughed scornfully, but still he laughed, at their attempts at football; he was genuinely glad to find cycling as popular with them as with men; but there are limits even to man's powers of endurance, his patience is exhaustible, and at last a reaction is setting in.

When the smoking-room was thrown open to these strange and complex beings, whose inscrutable ways are indeed past man's finding out, then the worm turned. Outwardly he preserved a courteous demeanour, inwardly he began to rage furiously and wonder why women imagined so vain a thing as that their too charming presence was to be always, at all times and in all places, desired.

Then when a few years ago they took to going to music-halls as the "smart thing" to do, he swore roundly, but he went with them; and now he is seriously resolved to assert himself.

One game, one special amusement, he will have all to himself, they shall not even look on at it, if he can help it, and in this he is sheltered by his own sex in every rank of life, and the result is the football mania, the most popular amusement of all classes of masculine society. Football matches two or three times a week, cup-ties, professional players, and play so rough that a football ground is only a degree less dangerous a place than a battle-field, are the order of the day. All the rag-tag and bob-tail of the neighbourhood are among the spectators, and except from a very discreet distance, the fairer half of humanity are virtually excluded, by the fierce excitement and

unparliamentary language of the motley crowd, to say nothing of the barbarous conduct of the players, from gracing so savage a scene with their presence.

Enough has been said of the feminine element in modern amusements; they have other characteristics common to both sexes, the most obvious being the tacit confession that Solomon was right in saying "all was vanity," as the passion for some novel form of amusement shows. Besides this craving for novelty there is a tendency to make a regular business of being amused, and professional amusers to amuse the company are now an established fact in social gatherings.

The pastoral play is a modern revival which is now very popular at garden-parties; flirting, talking scandal, listening to a band of music, playing, or watching others play croquet or tennis, being voted inadequate distractions for a people suffering from *Weltschmerz* or weighed down by the *Zeitgeist*; so some of the company, disguised as shepherds and shepherdesses, make love to each other, dressed and talking and courting as no shepherds or shepherdesses ever dressed or talked or courted since Abel tended his sheep or Pan played his pipes, at one end of a lawn, for the amusement of the audience at the other end, with perhaps an interlude or two of skirt-dancing.

Higher education has improved the amateur musical performer, from whom we have all suffered so much in the past; the young lady who "sings a little" is happily as rarely heard now as the voice of the turtle in our land, the pianist knows that unless she is worth listening to, her performance will only be an accompaniment to conversation.

The piano is less in favour as an instrument of pain or pleasure than it used to be, it no longer reigns supreme; the violin has usurped part of its dominion; the banjo happily has had its little day; the mandoline and zither have struggled for existence, but are never likely to be popular, though the craze for variety and novelty gave them a chance.

Amateur orchestral bands afford a great deal of amusement to the performers in them, but it is open to question whether the pleasure they afford extends to the audience, that depends largely on circumstances, over which the amateur conductor has, as a rule, very little control.

On the whole, there was some excuse for the *blasé* wit who remarked, that "life would be tolerable if it were not for its amusements." The truth is, amusement, like many other things, is overdone; instead of being the sauce of life, it is trying to become the food of existence, and is sometimes as unpalatable as medicine. Perhaps, too, the dying century is grown childish in its old age; the new century, as it matures, may become more rational in the degree and manner of its pleasures.

A SICILIAN ROMANCE.

BY C. E. C. WEIGALL.

I.

OCTAVIA LESLIE was seated in the little waiting-room at Taormina station, with her goods and chattels round her.

Before her lay the glitter of the Mediterranean, that turned its blue breast to the bluer sky, like a shield of lapis-lazuli, on which one or two Sicilian fishing-boats, with their brown sails, dipped on their leisurely course round the coast to Syracuse.

On either side of her, by the narrow-gauged railroad, up which she had just come from Messina, with heart beating with high hopes, stretched the flat level of the beach. And above her towered the dazzling reach of white road, winding up the face of the precipitous cliff, to the little Saracenic town, perched on the summit of the crag, which looked down a sheer five hundred feet into the sea that flashed at its foot.

Etna lay to the left of Taormina, vast and grim in the June sunlight, the volcano of which Octavia had dreamed waking and sleeping since that joyful day when her aunt, who lived in the fairest of fair countries, had invited her thither on a visit.

Miss Leslie had been left an orphan, and was earning her own living as a daily governess in South Kensington. She was almost, but not quite, dependent on her own exertions, but she had lately felt terribly fagged and unfit for work, and her aunt's proposal to give it up for a time and come out to her for a long holiday had flashed across her dreary existence like a sunbeam. The cheque that had accompanied the invitation had enabled her to make the dream a reality.

She was a handsome girl, whose excellent figure was set off by her neat blue linen gown, with its coarse lace collars and cuffs.

Her oval face with its cloud of fair hair and serious blue eyes was touched by that expression of dignified self-reliance that is one of the charms of the working half of the world, and is not acquired without a few bitter tears. She was four-and-twenty. The wish of her life was gratified, and her gloves and boots were beyond reproach, as also was the pretty sailor hat with its wing and bow.

And yet Octavia Leslie sat in the waiting-room at Taormina station, with a slip of paper in her hand, crying as though her heart would break.

The trains came and went through the dreary hour. The Sicilian

beggars squabbled in the dusty road, with the blazing sun upon them. The wash of the sea made the air cool with pleasant suggestion, and the slopes of Etna were green and desirable with their olive groves and chestnut woods, and long lines of lemon and orange trees among the black lava. Two hours earlier she would have thought it impossible that tears would have made any part of her existence that day. And now, for half an hour, she had despaired.

At last, however, with a sudden access of self-reliance, she rose to her feet, pulled down her veil, and walked out of the door into the road. The porter, in his blue blouse, caught up her small leather trunk. The beggars squabbled for her half-penny; the drivers of the carrozzini cracked their whips and shouted to the Signorina to climb in, loudly offering to drive her up the hill for fabulous sums.

But Octavia, with perfect calmness, chose the least noisy of the crew and climbed majestically into the carriage like a box on wheels, and was already half way up the hill, behind the pair of jaded little barbs, before the porter had had time to recover from the surprise of having received her half lira.

The note that she had wept over lay still on Octavia's lap as it had been handed to her by the hotel manager in the yachting cap. But the words were imprinted in her mind so forcibly that there was no necessity for her to read them again.

"MY DEAR OCTAVIA,—I am so distressed, so utterly wretched about you. But you had better return to England at once, for your poor dear uncle, who has been recruiting his health as you know at the German baths, has telegraphed for me to come to him at once on account of his serious illness. You know how afraid I have always been of the gout flying to his poor dear stomach, and now my fears are realised. I have no time to let you know, and feel distracted; but here is a cheque to take you home again, you poor dear. Pray go up to the house for a few nights at least. You will find my housekeeper there, who talks a little English and will take good care of you. Everything is ready for you, but you will be inexpressibly dull, I fear, my poor dear. But what can I do?"

"Your loving aunt,

"MARIA CERVANTES."

Poor Maria Cervantes, had she not been of the helpless order of Englishwomen whom a southern climate has rendered lymphatic, might have done much in the way of telegrams to prevent her niece coming so far on a wild-goose chase.

But in common with the rest of Miss Leslie's relations, she always considered Octavia, whom she had never seen since she was a school-girl in short petticoats, as a young woman so far gifted with common sense and self-reliance that she would be at a loss in no situation in life.

In fact, the Signora Cervantes considered that she herself was in

far more need of help and consolation than the girl who had arrived so far, after so difficult a journey, to find herself alone in a strange land.

But though perhaps Aunt Maria was not far wrong in her estimate of her niece, yet now poor Octavia, ignorant of all but the most rudimentary attempts at Italian, and a little alarmed at the appearance of the country people, who, to her mind, looked very much like what she had imagined brigands might do, and dazzled by the blinding sun upon the white road, was feeling very small and humiliated, a mere atom in the scale of a vast humanity.

But before she reached the summit of the hill she arrived at one satisfactory conclusion. Namely, that she would not be bereft of her well-earned holiday, even though she might have to commune with the natives by dint of signs. And that, return to England she would not, unless her aunt starved her into submission, which she knew was far indeed from the intentions of the plump Signora Cervantes, who was always happiest when people were pleasing themselves.

"Where you go to? What you say?" said the lean, brown Sicilian, peering round at her from the coach-box, as she sat in state behind him. "Hotel Britannique? Hotel Belle-Vue? Ah, Corpo di Bacco—what you say?"

Octavia held out her aunt's letter, which he studied with mute diligence upside down.

"Casa di Luna," she said, raising her voice to that shrill monotone in which a Briton always addresses a native of another country who is unfortunate enough to speak nothing but his own language.

"Oh, the Signora Cervante—Inglees lady—Ah!" Giuseppe laughed merrily, showing his white strong teeth, and snapped his fingers at his penetration. Then with a string of harmless abuse which comprehended the immediate ancestors of his horses, he urged them round the corner of the last bend in the road and into the little town.

Octavia, looking round her, saw the sun sink like a ball of fire into the sea. A cloud of swallows, pausing from their weary ocean voyage, rested motionless in mid-air on black wings, that hung against the primrose of the evening sky with the sharpness of an etching. And as the sun dropped, so they, with folded wings, sank swift as an arrow on to the green islet of Isola Bella, where they might rest in the blue grotto that the bats had just quitted.

She saw this and then the castellated walls and drawbridge of the town enclosed her and she was in Taormina at last.

The carriage rattled over the ill-paved streets; after she had been solemnly mulcted of five-pence by the Customs officer at the gate, who is not above such matters, in spite of his fine uniform in which he goes to the Duomo on Sundays.

They left behind them the square and the pleasant hotels, and turned sharply up a road leading to the mountain side; and finally drew up with a jerk at a gate in a high wall, which opening suddenly

displayed a long garden shaded by olive trees and prim lines of lemons. And beyond, a white stone house, where a dark Sicilian woman with a face like a cameo, and black hair that shaded a brow as lofty as that of Agrippina on a coin, stood ready to receive her. Displayed also, to Octavia's intense astonishment, the face of a young Englishman, apparently bodiless, propped by his chin above the garden wall, staring down at the little scene of bustle beneath him, created by her arrival, with an expression of bewilderment, which changed to one of much confusion as he caught her severe eye, and dropped like a stone out of sight on the other side of the dividing partition that apparently separated two houses from each other.

II.

It was very early the next morning when Octavia woke. At first she could not make out where she could be, but when she had blinked the sleep out of her eyes she became aware that someone was singing in the garden below.

The voice was a sharp one, that had about its tones something of the cicada shrilling in the heat, in the green boughs of the olives. And the words that it was singing were full of the broad sleepy A's and O's of the Neapolitan dialect. The pauses in the singing seemed to be filled up by some violent exercise with a broom, and the expostulation of half a dozen hens. And Octavia, suddenly interested, pushed aside the blind and looked out.

She saw an elderly woman in the field that lay the further side of her aunt's garden wall. A woman swarthy as the hay around her, with her head wound up in a scarlet handkerchief, and huge gold earrings in her ears, was busily engaged in sweeping the small chicken run that was fenced off just beyond the gate of the adjoining house, with a brown broom made of rushes gathered on the shores of the accursed lake that breathes out pestilence in its swamp—the lake Gurrita.

A slight movement on the girl's part, made her look up sharply; and catching sight of a stranger at the open window, she went hastily back into the garden, and slammed and locked the door in the wall, muttering something that seemed to Octavia, to be abuse of the "*Maladett Siciliani*."

Race prejudice dies hard in the South, and inter-marriage with foreigners has spoiled most of the charm that the Neapolitan and the thoroughbred Sicilian of the mountains once possessed.

But given two undiluted specimens of the race, and the hatred of the one for the other is as keen as it was in the days when the Romans were harrying the island, and the milder folk of the mountains, who are children of the Cyclops, were fighting for freedom against enormous odds.

When Octavia had leisurely completed her dressing, and was appreciating her honey and brown bread and steaming coffee with its froth of freshly milked goat's milk, in the verandah, she began to question Nina as to the people who lived next door.

Nina was capable of sustaining a conversation in very fair English—for the Signora Cervantes had been too lymphatic to become a proficient in the tongue of the country of her adoption, and was accustomed to address her maidservant in a lingo that was exclusively her own—and that consisted of a smattering of Italian and a large portion of pidgin English.

"Yes, I tell you, Signorina, they very bad people next door; your aunt never speak to them; always turn away her head, since they come three months ago, from heaven knows where, with a tin box and this woman—this pig of a Neapolitan—who has no civil words to speak."

"But how do you know that they are bad?" said Octavia, interested. Nina drew a little closer to her, and whispered mysteriously.

"It was the priest tell me—the padre of the little church of Caterina on the mountain side. He say to me—you have nothing to do with those people—those English heretics, for they have killed a man. And indeed, Signorina, it is the truth, though we never speak it."

"Killed a man?" cried Octavia with a shiver.

She was on the very threshold of a mystery, here in this land of romance and mystery, and she was enthralled at once.

"The milk seller, and Pace what sell the meat, say that if the Signora have speech with those accursed ones, they will serve her no more," said Nina, rolling the words round her tongue with real pleasure in the horror that was written on every line of Octavia's face. "And she never speak or look at them, and we never see them, for there is a door on the other side, to take them to the town, where the woman servant goes for the food."

"Who are they?" asked Octavia.

"It was three months ago, Signorina, when these two, this sister and brother, were making a journey on the Mongibello, to a place oh, far away, that they call Randazzo, that they came to a dispute with a Sicilian in a wood at Maniace, I know not how it was, and the girl was hurt a little, and the young man killed this Filippo Sarasate. But in Sicily everything is known, and though the Englishman brought his sister down here at once to see the doctor, the Sarasates traced him—for they are people who must have blood for blood—and now he must stay where he is like a rat in a trap, for if he comes down to the sea or the railway they will kill him. They have stabbed him once, but they will not hurt him while he remains in the house with his sister, only when he is alone; and he cannot move her, for her back was hurt. The accursed Neapolitan she-devil, they have had for many years. Ah! The Sarasates are a fine race."

The calm way in which Nina pronounced her eulogy on the band that were tracking the young Englishman with the persistency of

sleuth hounds, made Octavia realise for the first time the savage strain that still runs in the Sicilian blood. But her level mind was already seeking some means to make acquaintance with the unfortunate victims of the vengeance of the dead brigand. And she determined that not a day should pass before she had at least made an attempt to enter the house across the way.

"I suppose that the man who was killed was a brigand," she said with an attempt at indifference.

"Brigante? Oh, si, Signorina, if you will have it so; but he belonged to a family that has always held its head high, and is one of the Mafia and you know they never leave a crime unpunished."

As Nina named the dread band, she lowered her voice. For although it is supposed that all brigandage and terrorism has been rooted out from the island, the country folk are well aware that this is not by any means the case.

"But if I speak more of the heretics, Padre Giuseppe will give me a penance. They are not named here, and if it were not for the wicked woman who tends them, they would get no food; but she has the evil eye."

And Nina crossed herself with much fervour.

Octavia finished her breakfast, and watched Nina clear away the tray, still talking volubly.

Then she tied her shady hat under her chin and went out into the garden, walking between the rows of trees, now and again picking a luscious green fig, and wondering to see the purple seeds within staining the white flesh of the fruit as she nibbled at it.

She wandered round the borders of the shady garden, wondering as to the strong way in which it was fenced in from the road and from its neighbours.

There seemed to be no way of getting at the prisoners in the next house, for there was a strong door in the dividing wall, and it was locked; but taking a sheet of paper from her pocket, she scribbled a few words upon it, to the effect that she was an Englishwoman and had heard their story, and wished to make their acquaintance, unknown to anyone. This she tied round with a piece of scarlet string and flung over at the corner where the garden of the strangers joined that of her aunt.

She walked up and down on the path for some time, wondering whether anything would come of her attempt, till at last she fancied that she heard the cautious scraping of a foot upon a gravelled path and the rearing of a ladder against the wall.

The answer to her letter had come sooner than she had ever imagined, and she awaited the result with breathless interest.

At last the head of the Neapolitan woman—gaunt and grim—peered cautiously over the network of broken bottles that had been set to ward off intruders. In her hand she held Octavia's note with the red string, which she flung down viciously at the girl's feet.

"Away with you! You want to bring trouble here, you good-for-naught Englishwoman!" she cried, in a voice broken with passion. "Do you think that I do not watch them night and day—the two good young people? Do you think that I did not see you throw your letter over their wall, you spy of the Mafia?"

She spoke in excellent English, but Octavia was too much astonished to attempt to reply. The shock of her unexpected appearance, and the passion that was swaying her in every fibre of her being, frightened the calmer nature of the English girl, who could not understand it.

"If you try to tempt him out I will kill you—I, Faustina Carafa—so I tell you—so I do!"

And with a vicious snap of her teeth she descended the ladder and carried it away from the wall.

Octavia sat down abruptly on a garden seat and began to cry. She was bewildered by the sudden descent of the angry woman upon her, and she felt at first really frightened at her threats. But after a moment or two she sat up and energetically dried her eyes.

"But I am not a spy of the Mafia, and I *will* succeed!" she cried, stamping her foot on the ground, and alarming a green lizard to such an extent that he twinkled back into his crevice in the mossy wall with an inward determination to venture no more within reach of an unaccountable foreigner from the North Pole.

Miss Leslie was a woman of no inconsiderable determination and breadth of mind, and she would no doubt have discovered some way of making the acquaintance of the English people who lived in such miserable seclusion had not their acquaintance been made for her in a very extraordinary and unexpected manner.

She had felt a little tired with her journey and her emotions, and had spent the remainder of the long hot day in sleep, and it was not till the evening lay like a veil upon the land that she opened the garden door and went out on to the mountain road that stretched up and up towards Mola, the dirty little town on the hill that was an impregnable fortress in the days when the Mahomedans devastated the land, and when the crescent of the Saracens seemed to be about to wave above the Cross.

It was very still out there, and Octavia sat down on a stone by the roadside, and laid her face against the cool low-hanging branches of a pepper-tree, and felt the flutter of the bats' wings about her head.

The crescent moon hung low in the sky, against the convent on the edge of the precipice above the town, and a bell began to chime for the Angelus, caught up by every church bell in the place till Taormina was alive with sound.

She had never dreamed what nature might mean till now. She had never thought it possible that so much beauty could exist this side of heaven. And with a quick sigh that was almost a sob, she folded her hands upon her breast and repeated the Angelic salutation,

that seemed to her emotional phase of the moment to be the only words possible at that time.

As she sat there came the quick, hurried rush of feet up the lane, and the panting, sobbing breath of a man who could scarce breathe for haste.

She rose instinctively and set the gate ajar, holding it so that she could close the heavy iron bars behind any intruder. She knew, even before she caught sight of the ghastly white face, that it was the Englishman in the next house, and as he passed she jerked him by the arm, drew him in, and slammed the gate, locking and double locking it with all her strength.

She stood leaning against the bars, listening to the sound of the pursuers' feet as they died away and then returned, utterly at fault.

The Cervantes had carefully avoided any dealings with the outlawed Englishman, as their property lay exclusively among the vineyards and olive-groves of the country, and they were dependent on the Sicilians for labour; and it was not to be supposed that their house should have sheltered the fugitive.

When the feet of the pursuers had returned baffled to the town, down the flight of rough steps cut in the face of the mountain, Octavia turned to the man. He was very pale and fighting for breath, but she could see that he was a brave man, as he smiled at her, and strove to make light of his race for life, though with rather a rueful expression.

"It was a near shave that time! I suppose that you know all about it?" he said, as he smoothed down a crease in his coat. "I was a fool to do it, and I fear that I have frightened you very much. But I went into the town to get some medicine for my sister; she had a sort of convulsion; and the man set upon me in the alley behind the chemist's shop. It was too dark to see who he was, but his knife only just grazed my wrist."

He fastened his handkerchief hurriedly round his arm, where a red scratch was bleeding angrily.

"I flung up my arm, I knew that he would try for my heart," he said apologetically.

Octavia staggered to a seat and sat down. Now that the whole affair was over, she knew that it had been a great tax on her strength, and on her nerves, and she was afraid that she was going to cry.

"Shall I call your maid?" he continued. "I am so sorry for you. It seems unnecessary for you to be mixed up with my troubles."

He laughed, and Octavia saw that he had a merry, boyish face, and that he was apparently about five-and-twenty years of age.

She made a gesture with her hand to prevent him from moving.

"No, please, not," she said: "I am not weak and silly really, only it frightened me. I have been trying to make your acquaintance all day, but your faithful old servant has frustrated my attempts."

"Poor old Faustina."

"Please tell me what your name is. Mine is Octavia Leslie, and as soon as my aunt's maid told me your history, I made up my mind that I would help you."

"I am—my name is Gerald Fermoy. Oddly enough, I believe that at this moment I am Lord Patterscliffe, but as they will not permit me to either send or receive a letter, and no one will speak to me, I have no means of discovering whether this is the truth."

"And we live in the nineteenth century," breathed the girl.

"Yes, no doubt, but then Sicily in the mountains has perhaps hardly marched with the times. But I must get away, I have been ten weeks here, and I am beginning to feel desperate. And my poor sister too, the doctor is allowed to attend her: but now, since the English people have left the place with the hot weather, I am afraid that even his visits may cease after a time."

"But you will be in England long before then," cried Octavia firmly. "I do not bear the name of a Roman Empress for nothing. I am as determined as they are, and what is better, I shall conquer."

"I have not been a very good hand at saying my prayers lately," said Fermoy, under his breath. "But I think that if I were to be delivered from my prison I should not forget God. You see that before Maggie and I left Scotland—she is just twenty, though she looks almost a child—we did not tell a soul where we were going. So that no one at home has any clue to our whereabouts. We thought that our travels would be thus more interesting, but I certainly have since learned that I have made a vast mistake. If my people had learned that I was in Sicily and was unaccountably delayed, they would have certainly made a search for me before now. But we have no father and mother, and no very near relatives, so we chose to do as we liked; and it is through the unexpected death of my cousin that I have succeeded to the title. I never dreamed of ever doing so."

The sound of Nina clattering the knives and forks down upon the table for Miss Leslie's supper, here broke upon their conversation, and Octavia pulled her companion back into the darkness of the olive trees, while the maid came down the path to tell her that the frittata was frizzling, and the minestra was absolutely spoiling for want of being eaten.

Nina was very voluble as to the merits of her cookery, and when she at last departed, it was with a vast sense of relief that Gerald Fermoy—as we will call him—stole out of the bushes and followed the girl to the angle of the wall, where some foothold was afforded for the climber.

"I want to think to-night over this plan that is simmering in my brain," said Miss Leslie softly.

"Will you meet me here again at this corner, to-morrow evening at the same time?"

He looked down into her face, seen dimly by the light of the young moon.

"You are too good to me," he said brokenly. "If my life can reward you, it will be at your service."

She stood silent for an instant with her hand in his, and at the last he bent down and kissed the capable fingers that lay with such confidence in his own.

"If I were to swear that no woman save you should ever be my wife, what should you say?" he asked impulsively, in the excitement of the moment.

"I should say that you were a goose," answered Octavia lightly; but the glamour of the night was upon her, and her heart throbbed into her throat. Her musical laughter infected him, and he smiled a little.

"Yet I mean it," he said sturdily. "And I am an Englishman who owns himself beaten."

But whether it were by force of circumstance or by her beauty he did not say. He only watched her emotional face in the faint light, thinking that he had never seen anyone half so lovely as she looked just then, with the pale moon upon the glittering masses of her hair, and the light of determination in her serious eyes.

He thought that the lashes lay on her pale face like a cloud, and in spite of the fact that he went in fear of death, he would have liked to set his lips upon the scarlet bow of her mouth and to have held her thus bound to him for ever.

But instead, he sprang over the wall and vanished from her sight with a wave of his hand. And if Octavia went back to her room to dream of her new acquaintance, who can blame her?

III.

DURING the next four days, Octavia Leslie spent a great deal of time in making herself acquainted with the manners and customs of the little town of Taormina. And before the week of her lonely sojourn in the house on the hill was over, the Sicilians had grown quite accustomed to the sight of the solitary English girl, who always wore a thick veil over her broad-brimmed hat, walking with her usual leisurely gait through every lane and alley of the place.

They grew to think her a charming erratic being, one of the ladies of the "Inglese" nation, to whom they owed so much in the winter season. And they allowed her to come and go among them, without even a lengthy stare at her figure.

On the Sunday after her arrival, she went to the Duomo, through the burning heat, to hear the Mass sung by the rough, untutored voices of the priests to the creaking accompaniment of an organ that would have disgraced a Ranter service on a tub.

She admired the wonderful marbles and the tombs of the church, and she pored over the inscription that had been discovered in the

wall of the heathen temple on the site of which the Duomo was built. And above all, she sat and looked at the face of the Virgin Mother in the little side chapel away from the high altar.

The face was so full of the pitiful majesty of the woman who realised the sins and sorrows, and the vast possibilities of human nature, that Octavia sat and gazed at the alabaster figure wondering at the cunning of the hand that had carved so much dignity, so much sorrow.

When she left the cathedral by the door that led into the street, she had to pass through a crowd of beggars deformed past conception, and as she shuddered away from them, she pushed up against the figure of a man standing a little apart from the group of helpless invalids.

"The signorina is disgusted, as I am," he said, with a polite lifting of his hat.

He was very good-looking, in the dark Italian style, and his keen eyes took in every outline and movement of her form with a stern contemplation that had something almost threatening in its intensity.

Octavia replied curtly and bowed as he lifted his hat. And turning away indifferently he mingled with the crowd, and she passed on up the road towards her own house.

A Punch-and-Judy show was performing noisily in the square, and she paused to watch the vagaries of the desperate Punchinello. Laughing, as the crowd of gay Sicilians did, at his jokes, she could not distinguish her acquaintance of the moment before in the crowd of men in blue blouses and fisherman's caps, and the tight blue breeches and peaked shoes of the mountaineers who had come down from the slopes of Venere to confess and to share in the office of High Mass. But curiously enough his keen face and stern, condemning glance lingered in her mind with an intensity that would not be denied.

She walked home to her Sunday dinner of kid and asparagus with a thoughtful sense of disquiet that was strong upon her. And it was not until she had met Gerald for the seventh time, under the waxing moon, that she lost the feeling of being on the brink of an unpleasant experience that was beyond avoidance.

They had met thus every night, when the dark lay over the world. Further, Octavia had not at present gone, and she had not allowed him to trust Faustina, or even to inform his sister of the strange friendship that had sprung up between them.

It was not that they were afraid of betrayal by one or the other. For the interests of the Neapolitan woman were so completely bound up with those of the Fermoys, that she felt for them as she would have done for her own children. But, since the day that Octavia had thrown the note over the wall, Faustina had displayed an unreasoning jealousy of the girl who lived in the next house, and could bring herself to think no good of a woman who must be a spy of the Mafia.

And poor Maggie Fermoy, with all the unreasoning misery of a girl who has been suddenly launched into complete invalidism from sturdy health, would have blamed her brother for his heartlessness in indulging in a flirtation when she was in unendurable pain. And since the plan of Fermoy's escape needed some days before it could be brought to perfection, the two conspirators kept their friendship a secret and met only when no eye could see them.

But in that one short week Octavia had grown to love Gerald with a warmth of passion of which she had not believed herself capable. In her young life she had always held her head high, and believed herself to be beyond the reach of love, which she deemed to be a suitable pastime only for the drones of life. But now she realised the mainspring of a woman's life—the love that comprehends in its vastness, motherhood and the pitiful tenderness of a woman, when the man she loved is in trouble.

Their walks under the olive trees and their long whispered conversations that had been overheard only by the nightingales, had cemented a friendship that had begun pleasantly for the man, and with deadly earnestness for the woman.

And now he believed in her power to save him as much as she did. And he also had found that here was the one woman in the world for him. And having told her so they had enjoyed a few hours of happiness, since even with the fear of death before its eyes, love will have its way.

And, Octavia argued to herself, even should her aunt be scandalised at the whole affair it could not matter so much, since they were really engaged to be married and had a right to be together.

But when the moment was ripe for their venture Octavia found that love has its sorrows, as keen as its joys.

They were sitting together under the wall, on the bench that must surely have been made for lovers, since the face of it was towards Etna, the eternally beautiful, and it was hidden from the house by the thick, low-hanging boughs of the figs. Octavia had been making Gerald laugh over a letter that she had just received from her aunt.

It was an answer to one that she had written to the Signora Cervantes, announcing her intention of remaining some days in Taormina, since she was quite happy in the care of the indefatigable Nina. She had purposely avoided any mention of the boycotted family with whom she had made friends, and her aunt had evidently considered it quite unnecessary to warn her against them.

Maria Cervantes had little to say but to grumble at the expense of the hotel, and the unreasonableness of her husband's protracted illness.

"My dear," she said, with a finality that amused Octavia, who knew that her aunt had married her master of vineyards and olive groves to escape from direst poverty, in which the death of her father had plunged her. If the marriage had not taken place there would

have been little else but a vista of dreary penury before a woman whose talents were nil, and whose age was verging on the middle life.

"My dear," concluded the letter, "never marry a foreigner, they are so queer and snacky in their food, wanting a bit here and a sup there all day long. And indeed these German hotels seem to be made for pampering such tastes, and I am sure that I sit and cry often enough over your poor dear uncle, as he lies swathed with bandages all over his poor dear frame, drinking what they call Bock, but which I call filth, and which I am certain disagrees with the gout, for it seems to be flying all over him, and may end in his poor dear head. His temper is very gouty and I hear him calling, so no more from your loving aunt,

"MARIA CERVANTES."

"Oh, Gerald!" said Octavia, as she read over the letter with a demure smile. "She could not call you a foreigner, could she?"

Maria Cervantes would not have been ill-pleased could she have seen Octavia that evening. The girl was looking her best, dressed in a white cambric gown with a fichu of white chiffon, a dress that Gerald had never seen before. She had tucked a spray of yellow roses in the bodice, matching those in her hat, and her face was as fresh as the flowers. All that long week in Taormina she had worn but one gown, and that was the blue linen one in which she had arrived, and the inhabitants knew it so well, that she was always called the "English Signorina in the dress like the sea."

But that dress and the hat that matched it, now lay in a bundle at her side, tied up with string, and Gerald had never liked it so well as he did just then. He took her hand gently in his own, wondering at the beauty of the ringless fingers, white and tapering as those of a marble Diana.

"Dear," he said with yearning tenderness, "when I first saw you, I loved that hand that saved me from the Sarasate. And now to know that some day that hand will be all mine, is the most wonderful thing in the world. Listen to me, sweetheart. When I am ready, I shall walk at once to the station, and catch the last train to-night. And when I am once in Reggio—across the border—I shall go to the English Consul to change my clothes, and to tell him my story. Then, I shall telegraph to my old guardian to meet me in Paris, and shall travel as fast as steam can carry me, till I am there. And then—"

"Ah me, it is a desperate venture," said the girl, crying as though her heart would break. "And when I think that I love you, and that it may not succeed, it is like parting with my very life."

"Why, Octavia, you are not going to turn faint-hearted at the eleventh hour? You must think of nothing save that I shall be in London immediately, and that before I can reach England, my guardian will have started for Taormina, to bring you and Maggie and poor Faustina home again. And then, we shall be

married at once. For it really is not at all the thing for the bride of the fifth Lord Patterscliffe to be a daily governess in South Kensington."

Octavia laughed merrily.

"I liked my work, Gerald. It was so pleasant to feel I was doing some good in the world and earning my daily bread at the same time."

She was not feeling very brave that evening, and she had an ordeal before her from which the most courageous of women might well have shrunk. For on her shoulders, the onus of Gerald's escape rested—his escape from the tireless watcher of the Mafia, whose eyes seemed to be in every corner of the mountain fortress at once.

It was the great Festa of the year up at Mola, that evening. And already the population of Taormina was pouring out of street and vineyard, and winding up the precipitous rocky path that sheered from the lower ridge to the mountain fortress that towered into the sky two thousand feet above the sea. Dirty, low-class Sicilians and pigs wallow in the mire together in that town that once contained the flower of the Sicilian nobility. And to be compelled to live at Mola is nowadays a sign of the most complete destitution.

A line of red and blue lamps like a swarm of fireflies were set on the wall that bordered the road, and past them the ceaseless throng of people were climbing up, shouting as they went, towards the castle, whose windows, broken and ruined, were set with flaring, dripping oil lamps of wick set in a swimming basin of coarse tallow, such as the Southern races delight in. Half-a-dozen people, set against the sky-line, were letting off petards, and the crack of the harmless powder echoed faintly down to the house by the roadside, and mingled with the wash of the sea on the shore.

"Before we go in, Octavia," said Gerald, pausing with his hand upon the gate, "before I ask you to make the acquaintance of my poor sister, I want to feel that you are truly bound to me, and I want to give you something that has belonged to my family for generations, and which is well known as a Fermoy heirloom, as the Essex ring."

"I am bound to you, Gerald," whispered the girl softly. "Could I be more bound?"

"Maggie will know without any need for explanation what this signifies," he replied, taking from his finger a ring, the centre of which was one large engraved emerald, on which the eagle of the Fermoy with the coronet in its claws stood out in sharp relief.

Gerald took her hand and slipped it on to the finger that had never known a ring.

"With this ring I hereby promise that Octavia Leslie alone of every woman in the world shall be my wife," he said.

And Octavia lifted her face to his, and he kissed her.

"Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God, when you escape from here," she murmured passionately.

"If I escape the Mafia," he replied; "but if not——"

She held him with slender arms that trembled in the intensity of this supreme moment of possession.

"There must be no 'if not,' Gerald."

Her voice sounded like a declamation of despair, for she was striving with all the concentration of her heart and soul to force herself to hope, even against hope. Then she drew herself away with sudden self-suppression, and catching up the bundle from the seat, led the way through the gate into the unknown boundaries of the opposite house.

Gerald unlatched the door and let her into the long, cool stone hall, which was very meagrely furnished, owing to the great difficulty that they had had to secure any furniture at all which should give any show of comfort. As the sound of their feet rang on the pavement the door of one of the rooms opened, and the Neapolitan woman came out swiftly and stood with arms outstretched barring the way against them.

"She shall not enter here, I tell you. She is a spy of the Mafia. She shall not see the poverina, the girl whom her malice has injured. I tell you if you make inquiries you will find that she is a sister of the Sarasate."

She was like a Moenad, with her flying grey hair and eyes wild with passion, and Octavia fell back a pace or two against her lover for protection.

"Faustina," said Gerald sternly, "you are a wicked old woman. This young English lady has had the wit—which you have never had—to find a way to help me to get away from here. I am to leave this house to-night dressed in the clothes which she has worn since she came here, so that she might allow the villagers to grow accustomed to the look of them, and I shall catch the last train to Messina and be away at the British Consul's house before dawn."

His words brought conviction with them, and in a moment, with the impetuosity of her nation, Faustina was on her knees before the English girl, kissing the hem of her dress and murmuring words of thankfulness.

"And what is more, Faustina, is that she has promised to be my wife, and then you and Maggie must still live with us, and you must keep house at Fermoy Castle."

Gerald was smiling, for he was delighted with the impression Octavia had made on the old servant.

But his smile froze on his lips as a weird, shrill cry floated into the hall where they stood. Faustina sprang to her feet and began to tell her beads with chattering teeth. To her mind it was the cry of an evil spirit, a mocking fiend rejoicing at trouble to come, from the unseen frozen boundaries of the other world. But to Octavia and Gerald it sounded like some attempt at intimidation on the part of his enemy, who was near at hand though unseen.

As they stood together the cry came again, and Gerald, with a shout of relieved laughter, explained that it was only the hoot of a carnival horn from the festa on the hill; and still laughing, he drew Octavia into the room, followed by Faustina.

On a couch by the window of the lofty apartment lay Maggie Fermoy. She was pale, with the sallowness of a girl who has suffered much in the last few weeks and whose sufferings have been unrelieved. Her dark eyes were heavy with sleeplessness and with the many tears that she had shed over their perilous life. She gave a faint cry when she saw Octavia, for the sight of a stranger was very alarming to her, knowing as she did that her brother stood on the brink of a precipice that might give way beneath him any day.

But it was the Neapolitan woman who took upon herself to give the explanation before her young master could speak, and although Octavia could not understand the passionate flood of Italian that Faustina was pouring forth at Maggie's side, she could appreciate enough of it to know that Miss Fermoy was in full possession of the facts of the case, and that her feelings on the subject, if they might be judged by her kindling eyes and sudden wave of colour, were too deep for words.

"Go away now, Gerald," said Octavia quickly. "You have not very much time to lose before you ought to start. And there are several little details of your dress that I must arrange. Please go—I will tell your sister everything. And we shall not know a moment's happiness till we are assured that you are well on your way to Messina."

Maggie was touched at the confidence that could join them all in one, after so brief an acquaintance, and by the evident depth of feeling of the girl who loved her brother so well that, for his sake, she could share danger and difficulty, so that in the end he might win through victoriously.

But it was when the three women were left alone together that they realised to the full what their anxiety meant.

As Gerald left the room, Octavia held out her hand to Maggie, and they were silent till he returned. As he entered, his sister gave a faint cry, for so inimitable an actor was the young man, that it was no longer Gerald Fermoy who stood before them, but Octavia Leslie. He had copied her attitude, her gait, and the erect independent fashion in which she carried her head. Even the hair seemed to be the same, for the suspicion of a coil that appeared under the hat was of the copper hue, that was one of Octavia's chief beauties.

Miss Leslie rose, and with deft fingers drew the veil a little lower across his face, and arranged the lace at his throat. Her heart was at her lips, so that for the moment she could not speak, for the moment was tense with anxiety.

Maggie broke into crying, and Faustina sprang to her, moaning

and calling on all her saints. And it was Octavia again who had the strength of mind to speed him away.

"Go, Gerald—go!" she said, fighting for breath like a woman who has been running from danger. "And may God go with you!"

He gave one swift glance round, smiled cheerily at her, and felt for the knife that Faustina had tied about his waist. Then he opened the door and was gone.

Octavia laid her ear against the door, listening, with her senses sharpened by fear, till the beat of his feet died away safely round the bend of the road. She would have liked to act as Faustina was doing at that moment, and rock herself backwards and forwards in an abandon of fear and anxiety, beating her breast with outstretched hands. For the feelings that were surging within her were fighting for the mastery. But Maggie's words brought her back to self-control with a rush.

"Oh, my head aches—my head aches, and my back is so bad!"

The girl was in such evident agony, that Octavia, with the compassion of a strong woman, lifted her in her arms, realising that here, at any rate, was an outlet for her feelings.

When the paroxysm of pain had left the writhing figure with spent strength and dank, wet hair, Octavia bathed her head and laid her back on her pillows again, watched by the sullen dark eyes of the Neapolitan on the floor.

"You are better now, dear," she said tenderly. "You must be brave, for the time is quite short till we get back to England again, and then you will have the best advice at once. And, Maggie, you will have to keep me as a guest till then, for the servant in my aunt's house thinks that I have gone away and left Taormina for ever. And it will be much safer for Gerald if she knows nothing of my remaining here till help has come from England."

"Why, I shall love to have you!" cried Maggie, half forgetting her pain in her joy. "You know just how to lift me when my back is bad. Did Gerald tell you how it happened?"

Octavia shook her head. It relieved the tension of the hour to hear a voice talking on some indifferent subject, and she encouraged Maggie to continue.

"We three had gone up to Maniace, on mules, with a guide. And when we were up there among the oak trees, in the loneliness of the woods, another man joined him, and they set on Gerald and demanded money. And when Gerald got angry, Sarasate drew his knife, and I fell off my mule down into the bed of the stream, and knew nothing more till I woke up in a carriage that was driving us here, where we thought that there would be a good doctor and nurse, and a refuge for us for a time. And then Gerald told me that Sarasate was dead. But he had tried to kill Gerald, so that he was in the wrong. But we did not think so much of it till his brother followed us here, and we found that we were being kept like rats in a trap, with the terrier

outside looking through the bars. But if only I could get well I should not mind so much."

Octavia stroked her hair gently, assuring her, with a confidence that she was far from sharing, that before another week was over they would all be on their way home to England.

It was Faustina who first roused them, with the intelligence that it was eight o'clock, and that in five minutes the train would be passing under the mountain side beneath the house.

Octavia rose and went over to the window, away from the others, for the strain was too great to be borne with any eye upon her.

She was conscious, as she stood there with failing breath and eyes dim with anxiety, that the clocks in the town were chiming out the hour with a dull resonant chime that swayed and echoed through the dying day. She was dimly conscious also that she was praying, and that her wild petition was fraught with but one name—one desire. And that name was Gerald, and that desire was freedom.

Away in the dusk of the evening came the rumble of the approaching train, with a red flare of lamplight as it emerged from the blackness of the tunnel through the rock. The hoot of the guard's horn in the little station of Giardini floated faintly upon the breeze to her ears, the creak of the wheels as the train drew up and then, after a pause, rumbled away again towards Messina.

Had Gerald reached the haven of refuge in safety? Was he among those few passengers speeding towards Italy? Or, rather, was he— Ah, Heaven was good to her—infinately compassionate!

From one of the windows flashed for an instant a white handkerchief, outlined against the blue of the sea like a splash of snow upon Etna.

And she knew that Gerald Fermoy was safe.

IV.

THE first five days of Octavia's imprisonment passed slowly enough. She dared not go out into the world away from the little house that held her captive. But she knew at least that Gerald was safe, and besides that, nothing mattered in all the world. Sarasate had had no chance of learning that his enemy had escaped. And when he did so, it would be too late to hound him down to destruction.

From the top window of the little house Octavia could see Nina now and then disconsolately shaking mats out of the front door, with one eye upon the road up which Georgio Forni came every day with the steaming loaves of bread from the bakery, and with the other on the house where dwelt the man who had slain the Sarasate.

Octavia was certain that the Sicilian woman was devoured with curiosity as to the fate of the girl who had so suddenly quitted

Taormina, leaving all her boxes behind her, to be sent by Austrian mail-boat when the Signora Cervantes returned.

But she had little time to reflect on the curiosity of other people, for Maggie had been very ill since her brother had managed his escape, and Miss Leslie's time had been fully occupied in looking after the hysterical invalid. Her own health began to suffer in the constant confinement, and when the fifth day dawned and faded she began to think that there could be no danger to Gerald in the fact of her taking exercise that she so sorely needed.

In perhaps two days at the most Gerald's guardian would have arrived, armed with the full authority of the English law; and the three women would have packed their possessions and be speeding northwards in the train that so short a time ago had carried Fermoy to safety and happiness.

It was very late in the July evening when she put on her hat and slipped out into the garden and from thence into the lane that led steeply up to Mola, through groves of vines and beds of reeds.

Maggie had fallen asleep after Octavia had read to her for an hour, soothing her with soft touches that were almost mesmeric in their influence. Faustina was in the kitchen cooking the evening meal, and grumbling over the fact that the English guardian was so long in coming. She had been with the Fermoy's for thirty years, for she had been maid to their Italian mother, and when she had died, she had taken the two motherless children to her heart, with all the passionate affection of the Southern race.

Octavia, who was distinctly practical and British in her ideas, found her a little trying, and was glad to escape from the tragic atmosphere of the household even for half an hour. And it was only when she was alone on the mountain side, with the soft night above her and the olive-trees about her, that she began to realise the storm and stress through which that week had led her.

Around her lay the infinite blue of sea and sky, blending into one another with the perfect harmony that is Nature's greatest charm in the wonderful country of Sicily. About her were trees of olives, chestnuts, and vines, and the purple-laden bushes of figs.

She flung herself down at last, in a lonely spot between heaven and earth, on a bed of asphodel and bracken to think.

Below her was the wonder of the valley, with its stream bed and its clumps of yellow broom. The tinkle of the bells that the cows carry broke the stillness, and now and again a goat laden with sweet milk bleated uneasily. Somewhere away among the mountains a Sicilian, perhaps tending his sheep, was whistling on a pipe cut out of a sharp reed. He was playing tunes that tempted one's feet to dance—wild tarantelles and country dances, and weird invitations to love and war.

And the heart of Octavia went out to the musician, and she sang aloud in her happiness. She was planning out her life, sweet with

love and joy, as she sat among the short grass and moss of the mountain side. And when at last she rose to return to the house that was her present home, her face was smiling and her heart light.

She was turning the precipitous corner of the road, with one hand against the rock boulders, when she came face to face with a man in a rough linen coat.

At her left hand was the sheer descent of the precipice, where in the winter the torrent roared from the mountains, and where now the cows watered hoof deep in the stream that tinkled over the boulders.

She had never seen the man before, but she instinctively feared him, for he carried a knife in his right hand, and the knife was unsheathed, and where the faint light fell upon it the sharp edge glittered. She was afraid, and she scarcely realised the reason of her fear until the man, with a wild shriek, staggered back, clutching at the slight branches of a fig-tree that overhung the hundred feet of descent, and fell down—down!

It was Sarasate—she knew it even before the thud of his falling had broken the edge of the night.

As she clung, sick with horror, to the tree that had failed him, she realised that he had recognised her as the woman who scarce a week ago had left Taormina.

In his sight she was a ghost; and in his sudden grasp of the truth he had in his terror met death on the narrow path. A Sicilian is superstitious to the very marrow, and Sarasate in his superstition had found a bitter end. For he had fled from the ghost of his wildest fancies down into the limbo of his guilty conscience.

Shivering and helpless, Octavia shut her eyes, still clinging to her frail support. The hundred feet of precipitous fall must have killed him instantly, and she felt that she must follow him, down—down into the depth of the dry stream, where only the wild birds paused one instant for the drain of water that should refresh them in their flight!

There was no foothold anywhere in all that steep cliff for a human being, and she sickened as she thought of the crash at the bottom, and the rending asunder of soul and body. She was fainting, falling, and Gerald would see her no more.

"Miss Leslie! Surely you are Miss Leslie! What has happened? I come from Gerald Fermoy."

There was a voice, a healthy English voice, in her ears. And when she lifted her head, she saw a middle-aged Englishman, with a face that precluded any idea of folly or romance, staring at her with all the disgust of a Britisher for an hysterical woman.

"Miss Fermoy told me that I should find you here," he concluded awkwardly, putting his silk hat straight with a gesture that showed that he was much annoyed at having been compelled to ruffle even one thread of so much virtue and propriety. "Yes—he is Lord Patterscliffe now, and——"

"He is down there," said Octavia, in a voice that she scarcely recognised for her own.

"Who? Gerald? Nonsense! I have left him safe in London."

"Not Gerald—Gerald's enemy, Sarasate, the brother of the man he killed. He saw me, and thought I was a ghost."

"My dear Miss Leslie," said the lawyer primly, "your nerves are evidently overstrung. But we leave Taormina by the first train to-morrow morning, never to return. Surely the ghosts may take care of themselves, for neither you nor I are responsible for the death of Gerald's enemy."

"He is dead—he is dead!" said Octavia breathlessly.

Mr. Lascelles offered her his arm with a slight bow.

"And Lord Patterscliffe is waiting for you in London. Will you choose a dead enemy or a living lover?"

And Octavia Leslie chose. And her choice did not at all concern the dead Sarasate.

A HEART'S QUEST.

O HEART, some day to greet this heart of mine!
O life, in which mine own must intertwine!
Do ye unknowing walk in friendly guise,
And—that the time's not ripe—before my eyes
Lurks there a cloud that will not let me see
The wealth of love that is awaiting me?

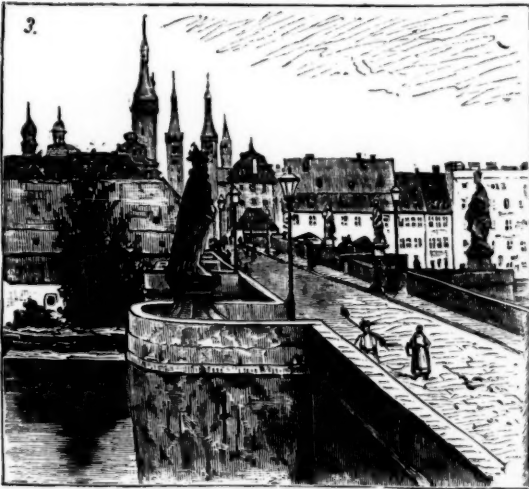
Or, are we strangers yet? Unknown, unguet,
The passion by-and-by to storm each breast;
Each to the other nothing—separate grooves
Wherein each life in rhythmic measure moves,
Counts day by day some mite of lifework done,
Till two tracks verge and broaden into one.

Hidden the future lies; we may not lift
The veil which screens it from us. Lurks no rift
Within those folds through which I fain would peer.
Heart of my heart, God guard and keep you, dear,
Till in your eyes I see the love-light shine,
Hear your voice ring in answ'ring tone to mine,
And yield my quest in silent ecstasy,
Content at last—mine own has come to me!

ANNIE G. HOPKINS.

HEIDELBERG AND THE NIGHTINGALES.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF SPAIN," "IN LOTUS LAND," ETC., ETC.



OLD BRIDGE, WÜRZBURG.

IT is a strange fact that in Germany, prose and poetry, the romantic and the commonplace, seem to live, as it were, under one roof, the best of friends; stalk through the country hand in hand; opposite extremes meeting and fraternising; so that a fat Frau of forty, weighing seventeen

stone who has become as ordinary and uninteresting as any woman that was ever created, may once have appreciated the beautiful in nature, her mind saturated with the poetry of the fatherland.

The woman, now unlovely, and therefore unlovable—from the romantic point of view—yet perhaps very passable at sweet sixteen, meeting her fate in some ungainly Herr, marries, stifles her romantic tendencies, accepts her lot, develops a waist of fifty inches, sinks into the ordinary *femme de ménage*, rules her household on principles of strict economy, and brings up her daughters to follow in her footsteps.

In Germany the daughters are very much what their mothers make them; they have not yet emancipated themselves from the maternal rule. Germany is only just beginning to wake up to the fact of her prosperity and success: this did not die with Bismarck, who left his legacies and his principles behind him, of which ambition was the ruling feature. Her wings, hitherto folded, are rapidly opening, and she will take flights undreamed of half a century ago.

So the young girls of Germany have not yet discovered that they are wiser than their mothers, or that the experience of age is not to be weighed in the balance with the cleverness of youth.

Again what can be a greater contradiction than the German student: one moment slashing at his fellow-student until both retire from the field-room with faces disfigured for life; the next moment, drinking unlimited beer, until they grow fat, heavy, and coarse-featured; and the third moment (to annihilate time for our present purpose) looking with beating hearts upon the flowing Rhine, their mind all aglow with patriotism and all afire with poetry.

We find the same contradiction in some of the old towns: conflicting elements going hand in hand—the ancient and the modern.

This was especially noticeable in Würzburg, where the ancient was so interesting and the new so commonplace. One moment we were gazing in silent admiration at the clear waters of the flowing Main; the time-honoured, historical old bridge and the mediæval houses surrounding it with their evidences of past warfare; the spires and dome of the cathedral rising against the blue sky; in the distance the small wharf with its loads of wood neatly stacked, the picturesque barges moored alongside, so suggestive of a breezy element and wider waters, whilst little groups of men ran to and fro at their work, their German voices penetrating even here, but subdued and softened; Marienberg crowning its rock, and bringing back so forcibly all the days of Gustavus Adolphus with their stirring events, the Swedish King himself standing out a head and shoulders above all his contemporaries; Gustavus who might have lived to reform the world but for his rash disregard of danger.

All this we saw at a glance, lost in the old-world atmosphere.

Then in the space of a few yards the charm was gone; nothing was to be seen but modern outlines, the new elements of yesterday and to-day: broad thoroughfares and stiff trees, a very ordinary palace, and shops and people hopelessly dull and dreary.

Again a sharp turn, and we were in the narrow winding streets of the middle ages, more tortuous and curious than one often finds, some of them recently painted—new dresses on old outlines spoiling the harmony of the whole; gables facing all ways; high slanting roofs and dormer windows; here and there a bit of curiously artistic old wrought ironwork worth its weight in gold, as rare as it is ancient; and occasionally a fine old doorway nobly proportioned, through which the dignified mediævals passed to and fro, not knowing that they belonged to the age of beauty, the feudal times, which would pass away with them for ever.

Again a sharp turn and we were in the broad market-place, with its quaint outlines above—those slanting roofs on which one never tires of gazing, that long row of dormer windows that seem to stare down at one like so many living eyes of the past; and below, the really living eyes of the old German market-women that under their

huge umbrellas are not half so captivating as the silent, never-changing eyes in those ancient roofs.

Again a turn, and we are in front of the interesting old Rathhaus, where town laws were made in days gone by, and rules were wisely and deliberately planned, and the strong and resolute mediævals thought of those who were to come after them.

Again a turn, and the spell was broken and the dream was over: the wide thoroughfares once more, the stiff trees, the comparatively modern palace, the square with its terrible statues and its awful but necessary railway station, which, had it been built in the feudal ages, would have been a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.

So we found Würzburg, like the German character, full of contradictory elements.

Even our very driver was not what he appeared. He looked sleepy and somewhat heavy, as though there were no mind to stir behind those pale blue eyes; whereas he was fairly wide awake with a distinct sense of the humorous. His old horse appeared as though its last hour had come, and the ramshackle old shandaradan had likewise its moments numbered; and yet the ancient animal tore through the streets with the frolicsomeness of youth, and though the droschke swayed from side to side like a ship in a storm, and creaked and groaned as if all its rigging were exposed to the raging elements, it went through its wild career, and neither rocks nor shallows nor eccentric steering brought it to shipwreck.

The driver even enjoyed our paroxysms of alarm: to him they were humorous, to us pathetic.

"Have you ever been brought up for manslaughter?" we asked during a lull in the storm—with scarcely breath to bring out the words.

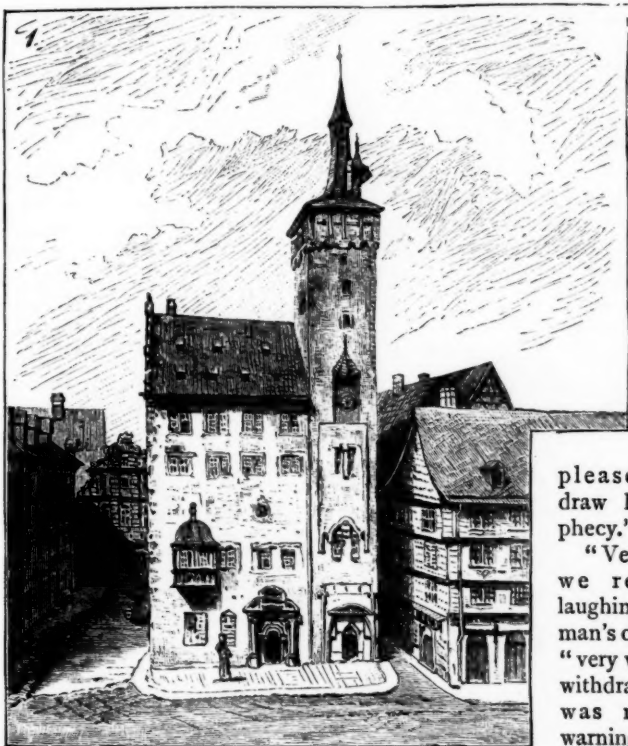
The pale blue eyes quite lighted up with a comical expression.

"Let the Herr have no fear," was the encouraging reply. "His *Kutscher* began driving when he was four years old, and could only hold the reins with his little hands in his father's great ones. He was born just over a stable and has lived his life in a stable. When he was two years old his father put him on the back of a horse and told him to stick on, and he did so. When he was nine he was driving alone in the public streets, and never had an accident, and never came to grief. The Herr's *kutscher* is as much at home on a horse or on his box as the Herr is at home in the carriage, a fish in the water, or a bird in the air."

"But you may as well kill a man outright as frighten him to death. And remember how the pitcher went so often to the fountain that it got broken at last. So you, one of these days, will come to grief, and bring yourself, your horse and droschke, and the people who have committed themselves to your care, all to a violent end."

"The Herr makes me tremble," said the man, turning pale. "They say to foretell is to make happen, which to my mind is only

another way of saying that there are still true prophets in the land. Some people can see a long way ahead, whilst others can hardly see what lies behind them. If I thought the Herr was right in his prophecy, I would give up driving, go back to the stables and turn simple ostler. I am fonder of horses than of driving; the intelligent creatures seem to understand every word I say to them; but then driving pays better. No, I cannot give it up; so the Herr must



RATHHAUS, WÜRZBURG.

please withdraw his prophecy."

"Very well," we replied, laughing at the man's concern; "very well; we withdraw what was more a warning than a prophecy; no prophet are we; the gift died

long since; but we advise a little more care in driving, if you wish to be on the safe side."

"Schön, schön," cried the man, recovering his spirits and his colour, and putting his hat the smallest bit on one side; "schön, mein Herr! There shall not be such another careful driver in the whole town of Würzburg."

Upon which he whipped up his horse, started off more furiously

than ever, and in less than ten minutes had carried us through as many narrow escapes of a violent death.

So it came to pass, as we have said, that when we dismissed him, out of sheer gratitude for sound wind and limbs we gave him an extra trinkgeld, for which he returned us a grand-ducal bow : a grand-duke being of course a sort of county-court crowned head.

To pass from the old-world charm of Würzburg into the prosaic railway station was like taking a plunge into a cold bath when the thermometer stands at zero. It was disenchanting, and the mediæval atmosphere in which we had enveloped ourselves evaporated and vanished as the morning mist vanishes before the rising sun. So we entered our compartment, closed the windows, and shut out as far as possible the smoke and the shrieking whistles ; made ourselves comfortable, closed our eyes, and dreamed of the days gone by.

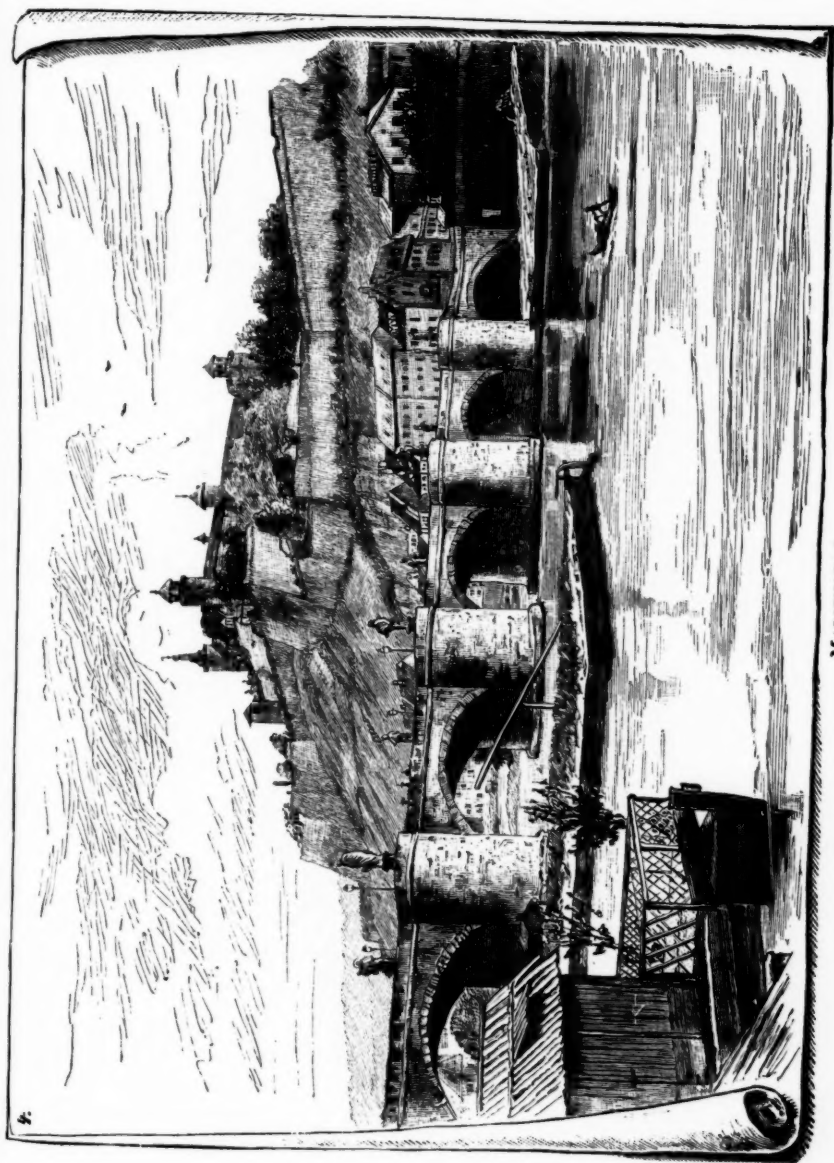
The days of Gustavus Adolphus ; all his great deeds ; all he wished to do ; all he did do ; all he might have done had he only exposed himself to less danger and lived longer. Perhaps he thought himself bullet-proof ; perhaps felt that he had a mission to perform (as indeed he had) and that his guardian angel would keep him from all harm until his work was accomplished. And we, who cannot see the end from the beginning, would say that his guardian angel would have done well. But just because we cannot see the end from the beginning, and do not hold in our hands the tangled threads of this world's history, so we may be pretty sure that the guardian angel did wisely in not turning aside the bullet which laid low the noble life, gave additional reins to Romanism, and set back the tide of civilization for a century and more.

With closed eyes we saw the Marienberg rising in all its majesty above the flowing waters of the Main ; saw the fortress crowning the rock gradually assuming vaster proportions, growing more and more military ; saw pageant after pageant streaming down the winding paths on its way to the cathedral, now a religious ceremony, now a military display, and now a royal marriage.

We saw the great Barbarossa, attended by a countless suite in gorgeous apparel, standing at the altar of the new cathedral and vowing eternal fidelity to his fair bride. Yet he divorced Adelaide on the pretext of kinship, and married, three years after, Beatrice of Burgundy.

That wise and restless Barbarossa, son of Frederick the One-eyed, and of Judith, daughter of that strange Henry the Black of Bavaria. A great man was Barbarossa, as the Italians called him, Frederick I., as he truly was ; a great man, with high aims and ambitions, who took Charlemagne for his model, and raised his empire to a prosperity it had not possessed since the days of Otto the Great.

Yet though skilled in war, and great in statesmanship, fate seemed ever against him. Astrologers would have said that he was born under the influence of the House of Saturn ; everything seemed to



MARIENBERG.

turn the wrong way; and once, in Rome, when he appeared to hold in his hand a success that would have established his power once and for ever, suddenly, in one night, his whole army, almost to a man, was smitten with a deadly pestilence, which blighted all his hopes and turned the fortunes of war against him. This was an enemy against which all his skill was useless. Yet a short time before that the Empress had received the imperial crown from Pascal III., and Frederick himself the coveted circlet of gold, token of Patrician dignity. So fate pursued him until he met with the very last death for which one would have supposed him reserved—that of being drowned in a small river whilst still full of life and vigour, military ardour and restless activity, in spite of his sixty-seven years.

Perhaps it was a merciful ending. He might have lost his battle against Saladin, as he had lost so many other battles in his day, and his sun would have gone down in the clouds of gloom and sorrow. As it was, his closing act was full of good intentions, as most of his life's purposes had been, and he left behind him the reputation of being great, good, and wise. In person he was especially handsome, his manner winning, his energy boundless, himself chivalrous and high minded; a good friend, and, with a few exceptions, a forgiving enemy. That he had his faults is only to say that he was human.

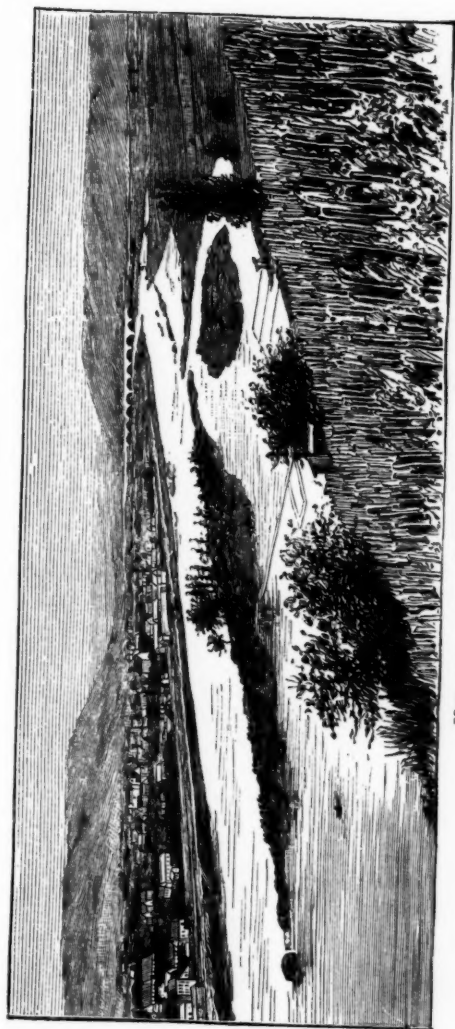
With closed eyes we saw Hermann of Thuringia, strangely refined and enlightened for his age, entertaining his poets and doing all in his power to honour and encourage them. Walther, greatest of the Minnesingers, is prominent amongst the group; he who loved the birds and left them his legacy. A flying mental leap over the centuries and we see Hermann receiving his courtiers on an English stage, and we hear Walther's voice competing for the prize, whilst the pure voice of Elizabeth in the person of Albani (who has nothing to do with the twelfth century) rises in exquisite tones above all others.

So we go on dreaming, whilst the train is making its way towards Heidelberg and the lovely Valley of the Neckar.

It was not so very far as the crow flies, but trains in Germany indulge in a dignified leisure, and long before we reached our journey's end the shades of night had fallen.

We approached Heidelberg with very mixed feelings. It happened that we had never visited it since the days of early youth, when life was all before us, with all the mystery and all the romance of the Unknown; life with all its possibilities and all its dreams: the world holding a crowd of friends who made our sunshine but have now nearly all departed, one by one, to the Land that to us on this side the veil is Silent. The lights are fled, the halls deserted.

We had loved Heidelberg. In those days we had not seen so very much of the world; our little travels had been chiefly confined to our native and beloved France (for whom to-day we weep): and



VIEW FROM THE HEIGHTS OF MARIENBERG.

perhaps nothing in France had ever affected us as Heidelberg, with its splendid situation and matchless old castle, all its historical interest, and its wealth of sunshine: attractions that seemed boundless, a beauty it was impossible to exaggerate.

And now, after long years, we were again approaching the charmed spot in which we had, as it seemed to us, left a portion of our heart. With what feelings should we look upon it again, now that so many of the hopes and ambitions and dreams of life had turned out mere illusions, will o' the wisps no longer even pursued?

Yet our very first introduction to Heidelberg had not been altogether a success. We had arrived in company with that unromantic malady, an influenza cold: not the present fashionable demon that goes about devouring mankind, but the old-fashioned illness that laid you low, ran its course, and left no ill effects behind.

We remembered well the charming hotel, with its airy corridors and lofty rooms, all delightfully shaded from the tropical sunshine; the large garden with its leafy walks, and the paths on which those leaves danced and played as the gentle breeze fanned and stirred them, and the sun sketched their outlines in lights and shadows beneath our feet. We remembered the sympathetic landlord, who had time to devote to his guests individually—they were fewer and farther between than they are to-day, and travelling was a delight and not a constant irritation to the nervous system.

"You have a frightful cold, sir," said our host, with genuine concern, "but I can cure it in one night."

To which we replied, with streaming eyes and raven's voice: "We shall be everlastingly grateful. This is our first experience of influenza. But we have come straight from a long sojourn in Paris, where *la grippe* is raging."

"It may well be your first experience," said the landlord; "but at your age it certainly will not be the last."

Croak, croak, croak, we returned, for just then a fit of sneezing and coughing took us, and the words were nothing but raven's language.

"The Herr is probably going to study at the University," continued our friendly landlord, who spoke and looked like a gentleman. "The students are not a bad set, take them all round, but they are dare-devils, excitable and impetuous; given to that mad custom of duelling; gashing each other to pieces, and going about for the rest of their lives hideously disfigured; some with half a nose, some with scores and gashes half an inch wide. It makes one ill to look at them," cried our host, himself one of the best looking and most presentable of men. Alas, he too is amongst the changes wrought by time, and has gone the way we must all go.

"If the Herr will take up his abode with me during his studies at the University, I will place one of my best rooms at his disposal, make him as comfortable as possible, and charge him no more



HEIDELBERG CASTLE.

than he would pay for an uncomfortable room in the town and wretched meals at a restaurant. They are all miserable places—*petits empoisonnements*, as they say in Paris of some of the cheap restaurants of the Palais Royal."

"But what of the Frères Provençaux, in that same Palais Royal?"

"Only the old story," returned our host—"extremes meet. But you have also the extremes of prices. Les Trois Frères at 100 francs a head, and a Petit Empoisonnement at 1.25, with *pain à discretion*. The latter must be very bad indeed to avoid bankruptcy."

"The bankruptcy is on the part of the unfortunate diner," we laughed: "the worst of all bankruptcies—that of digestion."

"Oh, the Herr is young; or he would know there is a worse bankruptcy than that of digestion," returned our host, smiling. "I saw it staring me in the face ten years ago, that other bankruptcy," he added with unusual candour; "and being an honest man, with my proper share of pride, I went through mental tortures I would not wish to my worst enemy; sleepless nights which brought me to the verge of madness and the dimensions of a skeleton. Then suddenly, one memorable day, a piece of good fortune fell upon me; my time for success had come. Here I am to-day, where I have been for eight years; and if I wished to retire to-morrow I could do so upon a fair fortune, honestly and honourably my own."

"Everything tells us you deserve your success," we replied: as indeed was the fact; not only the host's frank expression and prepossessing manner, but the admirable appointments of his hotel. "But surely your tariff is not based upon the offer you have just made us, or where would the elements of a fortune come in?"

"No," returned the host. "The offer I make you would hardly pay the ordinary terms of the room. But I am partial to the English. It may be a bad trait in my character, but I love them more than my own countrymen. I also immediately take prejudices for and against people; and it would please me to have the Herr residing in my house, to see him going in and out, and to make him feel comfortable and at home."

This conversation took place at night, after we had been many hours in the place and had made some acquaintance with the flowing Neckar and the wooded heights, out of which the ruined castle stood forth as a vision of dreamland. It was the month of May, a hot and beautiful May, and all Nature wore her freshest green; even *la grippe* could not altogether repress the exhilaration and intense happiness begotten of the mere fact of living and breathing.

We were almost alone in the hotel: the tourist days had not yet dawned, or were in their very first infancy (it seems to us that they only took root in the eighties): and those who travelled for the love of it seldom set forth in May—at any rate for the Rhine country. So our host had had leisure to be especially attentive to us. He was

a sort of cosmopolitan in the languages, and now would converse in English, now in French, and now in German, and—rare occurrence—really seemed to speak all three languages alike. It is nothing for a German to speak good English, but to find him equally at home with French, his accent pure and his words well chosen, argues a man of exceptional philological resources.

Such, however, was our host, and a man of great intelligence and cultivation into the bargain; an experience not infrequent in Germany in his rank of life, far rarer in France, almost unknown in England.

Our Heidelberg host, however, was very exceptional even for Germany; the best of his class we have ever seen; and he confessed to us afterwards that he was of far higher birth and education than his present position indicated.

"My father was a man of great wealth," he one day said to us, amongst his many confidences; "the son of a noble, and therefore a noble himself, as I might also call myself if I chose, but it would be to my thinking, incongruous with the position of an inn-keeper. But my father became involved in rash speculations, lost all his fortune, and at eighteen I had to turn out and face the world. That is just twenty years ago. It was a bitter experience, humbling to my pride of birth, destructive to all my ambitions. For some time I wished myself rather dead than alive; courted every danger; and from having been a brilliant lad of high spirits, I fell into a semi-melancholy condition. Grief had killed my father, but fortunately my mother was still living, and to her deep affection for me, her own high spirit—the spirit of the patrician—her indomitable courage and her wise counsels, I owe it that to-day I am still on earth, and, though in a humble position, prosperous. But I have never married."

"Wherefore not?"

"I could not marry in my own rank of life, I would not marry in any other. To adopt an inferior profession from force of circumstances is one thing; to marry beneath you I hold to be the greatest mistake anyone on this earth can commit. It is bound to come out somewhere; will cloud your whole future, give you a foretaste of Hades, and make you wish many and many a time that you had never been born. I cannot say that this is my experience, since I have never married, but it is my firm and settled conviction. I have also another reason for remaining a bachelor."

"What is it?"—as he paused with rather a dreamy expression in his eyes—eyes that were large, dark blue, and very beautiful. "You have given one reason for never marrying, and I hold it to be a good one: what is your other reason?"

"This," he replied, touching his chest. "I know that I have a weak spot here; I have a conviction that it will one day sign my death-warrant. It is inherited, and I would not bring children into the world to the inheritance of disease. Other people are less

scrupulous, but I do not regulate my life by other people's reasonings, or make their consciences a standard for my own principles. I told you that my father died of grief, and so he did; but grief was not the word which appeared in the medical certificate. Grief, in short, threw him into a galloping consumption. No doubt he had always borne the seeds of it, or the predisposition—call it what you will—within him. The mental torture he went through was quite sufficient to develope latent mischief. Care killed a cat, we know. Harrow of mind preys upon the body, dries up the springs of life, extinguishes vitality, and saps the very foundations of the constitution.

"Thus one day, when my father went out, got wet through, and was for some hours in his wet clothes, the spark of disease took fire and the flame once lighted burnt steadily to the end. The very next day he came down with the flush of fever upon his usually pale face. My mother, keen and discerning, did not like his look, and tried to persuade him to send for a doctor. 'Karl,' she said—I was named Karl after him—'Karl, my friend, we can bear with loss of fortune, but if we lost you, that we could not survive. You know how the English proverb says that a stitch in time saves nine; let me send for Dr. Altburg.' My father would not hear of it. 'Liebchen,' said he—my mother's name was Elizabeth, and somehow my father twisted it in his own mind into the pet name of Liebchen: there is a sort of resemblance in sound between the two—'Liebchen, I never felt better in my life. Your fears for once outrun your judgment. In fact I feel almost mentally and physically elated—something quite out of the common. Altburg would only laugh at you for sending for him.' It was elation born of fever, and no pleading of my mother's would consent to his seeing the doctor.

"The days went on. Sometimes my father seemed quite himself, the cloud upon my mother's beautiful face would lift, her step would become more elastic; other days, again, he would seem languid and depressed. A cough came on, which he declared was merely an ordinary cold. But one morning, whilst dressing, he brought up a little blood. Then my mother sent for Altburg without asking my father's permission. 'Frau Baronin,' said the old doctor, on coming down from the sick-room, 'you have sent for me too late. Your dear husband is past the help of man.' So it proved. Exactly three months from that day my father was carried to his last resting-place."

"And your mother?"

"Her powers of endurance were greater than she imagined. It is always so with well-born people, whose nervous systems are highly strung. They do not sink before trouble, but rise above it. With my father's death died her happiness, but she herself survived. Fortunately, sufficient was secured out of the wreck to give her a small competency; she was still independent of the world, so that I had only to think of myself."

"And you chose your present career?"

"No; I did not choose this career of mine; it was absolutely thrust upon me, and at a time when, as I have told you, failure stared me in the face. The late proprietor of this hotel had in days gone by been beholden to my father, who had in fact advanced him a large sum of money in an hour of need. I was passing through Heidelberg on what seemed to me very like a fruitless errand, a forlorn hope, and I chanced to meet the proprietor as I was crossing the old bridge. 'Whither bound?' said he. I told him. 'You will stay here for twenty-four hours,' linking his arm in mine, 'and put up with me.' 'That is far beyond my resources,' I returned. 'I could not spare the amount of your bill from my little fund.' 'Bill!' he cried, standing still and absolutely roaring out the word. 'Bill! Charge the son of your father, who saved me in my hour of need, a single groschen for staying in my house? If you put up in it for good, and drank champagne every day, you should be as welcome as sunshine in the vineyard, and my debt would still remain as great as it is this hour. Talk not to me of payment.' And the tears absolutely stood in the good man's eyes. 'Come with me,' he added, hurrying me along. 'I have an idea. To-night, after a good supper, and over a bottle of my choicest Chambertin, I will unfold it to you.'

"It was of no use making any excuse: that I had not the heart; that I had not the time; that twenty-four hours would be fatal to my poor little forlorn hope—I had to yield to his indomitable will."

"And with what result?"

"You shall hear. I will give it you in as few words as possible. That evening he closeted me in his private sanctum, the very room in which we are at this moment, and unfolded his plan. We talked till the clock struck midnight, but I will give you the substance, not the details of what transpired. 'In a word,' he said, 'this is my idea. I am growing old. I am prosperous. My wife is dead, and we never had chick nor child. I own none but the most distant relatives, most of whom I never saw, and not one of whom cares a straw whether I am living or dead. What I possess I owe to one man alone—your father. But for him I might to-day be begging my bread, or earning a pittance by the sweat of my brow. Do you know what your father did for me—the Herr Baron, who was of the salt of the earth? He advanced me a very large sum of money in my hour of need absolutely without security; because he believed in my integrity, and also a little, perhaps, because in the years gone by we had been fellow-students and friends together in this same town of Heidelberg. I say that I am now growing old: for though only sixty I am suffering from a heart-malady which at any moment may carry me off. Now for some time I have wondered what I could do. I have property; I have a flourishing business; not a groschen will I ever leave to those distant relatives who refused me the smallest help in my hour of need. I don't care to leave all my money to charity. Consequently I want an heir; and for some time the question has

been weighing upon me: Where can I find my heir? This very morning as I was getting up, I said to myself: My days are numbered, though I don't know their exact number; I am growing ripe for the sickle; I must find my heir. And in the course of the day I went out, and who should I see coming along but yourself. And when I looked upon your troubled face and noticed your threadbare garments, a sudden flash, an inspiration seized me, and I said to myself: Fool, idiot, not to have thought of this before. There comes thine heir. And now you know my idea. Throw up your forlorn hope, and all other hopes; come to me as my adopted son. Take up your abode here and be initiated into the simple mysteries of hotel keeping; become my partner, and from that hour all that I have is yours. The life is a pleasant one; there is constant change and variety; your guests are affable, and I have always found them satisfied. Like myself, you were born to higher things than keeping an hotel; but at this hour of my life I realise that the great secret of happiness is peace and contentment. Having food and raiment, the Scriptures tell us, let us therewith be content. What do you think of my idea?"

"And what was your reply?"

"What could I think? What could I say? The good old man had quoted a verse of Scripture: another verse had flashed across me as he did so. It was this: 'Cast thy bread upon the waters and thou shalt find it after many days.' Little dreaming, my father had cast *his* bread upon the waters, and here was the abundant harvest. For some time I remained silent, full of conflicting thoughts and emotions, the good old man keeping his eyes upon his wineglass waiting for my answer.

"I was filled with wonder and admiration for this noble disposition. Here was an example of that heaven-born gift of gratitude, rare as it is great: and no doubt he possessed other gifts and graces. His face, indeed, was an index to his character, and has been described as that of a man in whom there was no guile. My first thought was all for the man who sat there quietly looking at his wineglass, as though he had just been making me the most trifling offer. Come what might, I felt that from that hour I loved him as a second father. My next thought was for myself. Yesterday almost penniless, not knowing which way to turn, or whether in a week's time I should have a roof over my head. To refuse such an offer—made, moreover, rather in the light of a petition than a favour—would surely be to fly in the face of Providence. Decline it, and I should deserve to be forsaken.

"And yet the demon Pride here rose up before me. An hotel keeper! The son of patricians for generations past would lose caste for ever. What would my mother think and feel, she whose ancestors had been princes in the land? But the struggle was brief; my better nature came to my aid. 'All labour is honourable,' cried Reason.

'Yesterday you were in danger of bondage and slavery, to-day emancipation is offered you; an honest career, competency. Take it, and return thanks to the Father of all mercies.'

"Still my would-be benefactor was silent; but every now and then he glanced for a moment at my face, and I felt that he read all that was passing through my mind. The silence was unbroken for perhaps five minutes, but so numerous were the thoughts that flashed before my mental vision like scenes in a panorama, that it seemed an hour. At last my mind was made up; the old man saw it. 'Well?' he said, in the gentlest of tones. 'What is it to be? Karl, do you accept me for your second father? Will you give me your love and confidence, and make glad the few remaining days of a lonely life?'

"And then my self-control broke down, and like Joseph of old I lifted up my voice and wept—or rather I wept silently. But I did not, like Joseph, hasten to my room. I threw my head down upon my arm on the table, and passing my other hand across, it was clasped in that of my benefactor. I felt that he was little less affected than myself, but he kept his self-control. He understood, and then and there the bargain was sealed."

"And you have never repented?"

"Never for one moment. That night he gave me an outline of his whole life, so that as he said, we could no longer be strangers. He told me his exact position: how fortune had favoured him; how a blessing seemed to have accompanied the money lent by my father; how he had not only paid off his debt, but had been able to buy his hotel, so that he was actually entertaining his guests in his own house. In twenty-five years he had accomplished all, and put by a good sum into the bargain. And all had been done, not by extortion, not by hoarding every thaler he made, but by fair dealing and an open purse. A tenth of his earnings he devoted to charity, and if on occasion more was needed, he did not stay his hand.

"'You see,' he said, 'I have had no encumbrances; no children to cause a run upon the bank. My wife was a frugal woman; sparing in all ways except in the matter of helping her poorer neighbours. No tale of distress ever came to her in vain, and when she died she took with her to the better land the blessing of the whole town. No wonder, since I have found myself alone and my day drawing near, that I have longed for an heir—the one blessing denied me by heaven. And it has suddenly been given to me. Who so fitted to succeed me as the son of my benefactor?—so that in turn I become a small benefactor to him. I see in this the hand of Providence. Already I love you as a son; and to-night I enjoy a calm feeling of repose, a glow of happiness, such as I have never had since I lost my wife.'

"Much more he said, until I grew more and more overwhelmed, and was silent from excess of emotion. What had I done to merit all this? But it came not from any virtue of my own; it was the bread

cast upon the waters by my father, best and noblest of men, coming back to his son after many days."

"And your mother? What did she say to your good fortune?"

"That is exactly how she took it—good fortune. I need not have feared that her patrician pride would revolt at any loss of caste; she was far too sensible for any thought so narrow-minded. The next morning I left my benefactor, and hastened to Frankfort to tell my mother the good news. She listened in silence, but I could see how deeply she was moved. Remember, her competency was very very small, and for myself, ruin had well-nigh stared me in the face. When I ended my tale she made no remark, but rising, went to her room where she remained closeted for over an hour: on her knees, I doubt not, thanking heaven for its mercies, her heart overcharged with gratitude; holding spiritual communion with her husband. When she returned, placing her hands on my shoulders, she quietly said: 'Karl, never cease to thank God for His great mercies to you. Let it be your endeavour to be worthy of them. Follow in the footsteps of that good man of Heidelberg, and be ever ready to help those less fortunate than yourself.'

"Matters were soon arranged, and within a fortnight I had taken up my abode here. Before that time had elapsed my benefactor had made his will, leaving me all he possessed, excepting a tenth part of his savings which he left to charity. My mother quitted Frankfort and came to Heidelberg. We saw each other daily, and when, two years after I had joined him, my benefactor died, she came to this house, occupying this very room. Her spirit haunts it still. Two years ago I lost her, yet I have never been able to realise that she is gone."

"And you have prospered?"

"In all ways. The fortune my friend left me I have doubled; this house is my own; and I might almost call myself a rich man."

"And you are happy?"

"As happy as a man can be who is alone in the world. I feel that the day will come when I, too, shall want an heir—and not possess one."

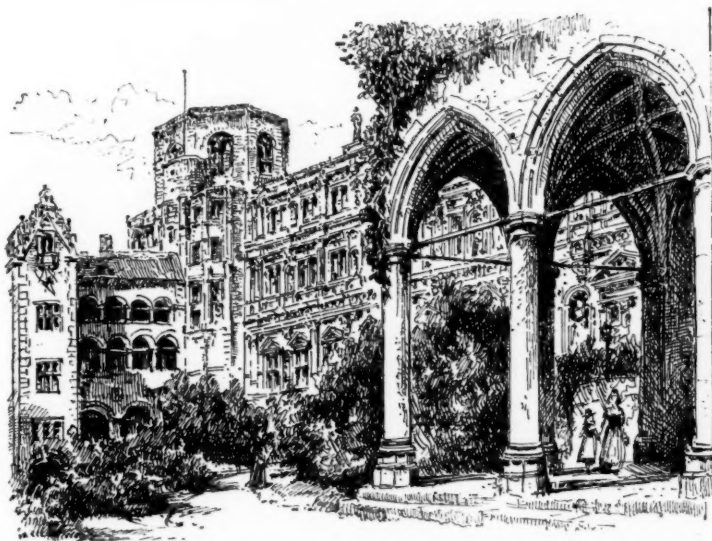
"Herr Karl," we returned—for we had seen a good deal of our host by this time—"this is folly. You must marry and that soon. Many a charming woman in your own rank of birth would jump at you, as the saying is. Nature has favoured you above most men, and so has fortune. You might to-morrow realise and retire into private life. Do not think about that delicate spot. If only those married who are absolutely sound there would soon be too much elbow room in the world. It is your bounden duty to marry, that your name and your father's name may go down to posterity in a direct line. The stock is too good to be allowed to die out."

"Just what my dear mother used to say," replied Herr Karl, laughing; "and if anyone could have persuaded me, it would have been she. But I cannot induce myself to do this thing."

"It is evident that you have never been in love. When that befalls you, your mother's wish will be fulfilled."

"The unexpected happens," he laughed, "but in this case I should rather call it the impossible. No; I have never been in love. Either my fate has never yet crossed my path, or I am not susceptible to the tender passion. Certain it is that I have never met the woman to whom I feel I could cheerfully devote my life. Love, I take it, must overtake one like a mighty tide that nothing will put back. If ever that should come to pass in my case, I know not what may be the consequence."

But all this conversation did not take place for some time after our



OTTO-HEINRICH BUILDING AND WELL-HOUSE.

arrival in Heidelberg. On that very first night, miserable with influenza, we followed our host's advice and went early to bed. "When the Herr rings his bell," he said, "I will bring up my remedy. To-morrow you will be convalescent."

That, we thought, was too good to be true. He had thoughtfully had a fire lighted in the room, though the month was May, for at sundown the air had grown chilly. Presently he appeared with his remedy.

"This jug is full of mineral water and you must drink every drop of it," he said. "I have put into it a little homœopathic tincture, and the two combined are a sovereign remedy for *la grippe*. But you have not enough clothes on the bed," he added, when with some

trouble we had swallowed three large glasses of the water ; and ringing the bell, he ordered in a couple of blankets.

"The usual system of bedclothes in Germany is wretchedly uncomfortable," he remarked ; "I will have none of it here, but good honest blankets."

It was useless to protest that one might as well be killed by the cold as smothered to death ; we had to submit to a sort of dry packing, and if the remedy was severe, it was effectual.

Whether the tincture was a soporific, or the mineral water had special properties, certain it is that we slept through the night and awoke next morning comparatively well. Magic had been at work. Our host paid us an early visit.

"I told you so," he said, when he saw the transformation. "My remedy never fails. You must not get up until after breakfast. The morning is magnificent ; it is warmer than yesterday ; and by one o'clock you will be ravenously ready for dinner."

We knew little of our host at that time, but thought him the best, most attentive and most kindly landlord on the face of the earth, and time more than confirmed the impression.

That evening—it was a Sunday—he offered to accompany us in a walk, an offer we gladly accepted. The day had been warm and brilliant. By one o'clock we had lost every trace of cold, and felt able to enjoy to the full this earthly paradise. Never, we thought, had we been in a spot at once so beautiful and so romantic. The charm did not lie in the town itself, which had nothing much to recommend it, but in its matchless situation ; in the broad flowing river ; the wooded heights rising so splendidly above the town ; the far-reaching historical plain, where another and still more romantic river coursed like a silver thread through the land ; above all, the wondrous castle without its equal on earth, that reposed upon the sloping hills, rising out of the forest, a gigantic picturesque ruin, resembling a scene in fairyland rather than anything earthly.

It was an evening worthy of the day. The sun was going down in splendour, and the lengthening shadows were fast giving place to the shades of night. Bands of students were going about the town, and seemed inclined to be excited and uproarious. It was a special day, but in what it consisted has escaped our memory. The streets were narrow and noisy in the older part of the town.

"There stands the university," said our host, pointing to a large somewhat commonplace building. "I never went to it, but my father did, and on that fact, strange as it may appear, all my own fortune, my present career, has turned. It is a romantic story. Within those walls perhaps the best and the worst of Germany has received its education. Men who have gone out into the world and proved wood that would bear carving ; others who like the castle on the heights, have gone to wreck and ruin. Look at these faces," as a band of students in green caps passed at the moment, four or

five of them with deep scars across cheek and forehead. "What can be more senseless, more culpable, than this habit of duelling for no earthly reason but because it was done before them and will be done after them?"

"They look proud of their scars," we said, as they went their way, evidently bent for the castle-heights, singing a drinking song, and looking the very embodiment of rollicking careless life.

"They glory in their scars," returned Herr Karl—as we afterwards learned to call him—"as much as though they had been gained fighting for the fatherland."



WELL-HOUSE AND GRAND GATEWAY.

"Do they ever lose their lives in these duels?"

"Seldom, if ever," was the retort. "The seconds are too cautious for that. The room is always crowded with students whose sympathies are on one side or the other. Nevertheless some ghastly scenes do take place, and now and then a student is carried out, the blood pouring from a gaping wound. But let us pass to scenes suggesting pleasanter thoughts."

And presently we stood upon an old bridge and looked down upon the waters flowing to the sea, the evening sky reflected upon their surface. Not long ago the sun had set, the shadows had all disappeared, the sky was darkening. The moon was rising; soon the

whole landscape would be flooded with a silvery light. The wooded slopes were beginning to look black and mysterious; the castle was growing misty and invisible. Afar off we heard a band of students in a patriotic mood singing *Die Wacht am Rhein*. That would be succeeded by a drinking song, to be followed by a song even more questionable. They were in the days of their youth; reckless of consequences and the Preacher's warning. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth"—they would go no further than that, for they were sowing their wild oats. It has been said if these are not sown in youth, they will be in age; as though every man's life must bring forth a crop of tares sooner or later—a dangerous doctrine.

"How many a wish have these waters carried for me into the Rhine!" said our host: "as unfulfilled, as lost to me, as the Rhine itself when it gives up its life to the sea."

"But that is the experience of everyone. Life is made up of hopes that never bear fruit and desires unfulfilled."

"No doubt," said Herr Karl; "and so perhaps the best is to go through life without ambitions. I wish," turning the subject, "that to-night they had happened to illuminate the castle. It is really a grand sight. Everything stands out in vivid outlines; the woods receive the glare and the sky reflects it. But it is too early in the year; and no royal personage happens to be staying in the town. Shall we ascend to the castle? It will repay you."

"But is it not closed?"

Herr Karl smiled. "Some are privileged," he said. "Only trust yourself to my guidance. You are quite equal to the ascent? *La grippe* has not made you weak?"

"Lead on, Macduff," we cried. "We too, like those students, are in the days of our youth—though not given to drinking songs."

"The days of our youth," echoed Herr Karl, mournfully. "Oh to be eighteen, and *insouciant*. I have never known it. It seems to me that I have had no youth. When I was eighteen my father died, and for ten years I struggled with adverse fate. It was all I could do to gain my daily bread. Brilliant prospects, exalted hopes, cherished ideals, all, to quote your Shakespeare whom you yourself quoted just now, faded like the baseless fabric of a vision. At twenty-eight my fortunes changed; and now at thirty-eight I feel quite middle-aged. Life has no more illusions for me. And you cannot be more than eighteen—life for you is just beginning. Oh to be eighteen—and *insouciant*!"

We knew little of our host at that time, but some men's faces indicate their character; they are stamped with the past, and something of the future is there also.

"Herr Karl, you misjudge yourself. You have not yet reached the prime of life. We have a prophetic vision—it was born with us. It may be plainly seen that the past has left its traces upon you

—and it is equally evident that there is happiness for you in the future.”

“Then it will come as an unexpected blow,” laughed our host.

We had plunged into a forest path. The trees met overhead, and our way was gloomy. We might have been knight-errants of old in



BUILDING OF HENRY THE WISE.

quest of the Sleeping Beauty. Darkness had fallen. All at once a flood of melody arose, unearthly, entrancing. It was not the students with their drinking songs; it was the nightingales. “Oh, the nightingales! the nightingales!” Up to that hour we had never heard them in such numbers; but, many a time since, in the Dauphiné

Alps, we have listened to the myriad throats, pulsing upon the air, thrilling one's senses, have stood entranced, unable to move; unable to do anything but listen, transported, intoxicated with the melody. Does it gain anything of its exquisiteness from the mysterious darkness? from the fact that the matchless songster is invisible? This must add to its charm undoubtedly. "Oh, the nightingales! the nightingales!" Herr Karl felt our delight.

"A new experience to you," he said, "but to me, how old! Night after night when the nightingales are singing, I have wandered up here alone to listen to them. At first I used literally to weep with excess of feeling, but I have now grown used to them. I still feel their charm, but at thirty-eight the tears are a long way from the eyes."

We continued our way, and still the nightingales sang, and myriads of fireflies floated about the woods, until we felt persuaded that this was an enchanted world. The sky had grown quite dark and we could see nothing of it through the trees; but one by one the stars had come out. Presently we emerged from the forest, and found ourselves in the neighbourhood of the Castle. A few winding paths, a turn to right and left, and we stood before the entrance. Herr Karl placed his hand upon a bell and rang a peal. The cry of an owl went through the air as though in answer. What business or what place had night's shrieking harbinger amongst the nightingales? Mingling with their flood of melody it sounded like a bird of omen breaking in upon a divine message of goodwill.

But we had other answer than this. The door was opened by a custodian; an amazingly tall thin man who looked more like a phantom from the world of spirits than a human being: a man born for the hour and the occasion. At sight of our guide, he threw open the door.

"Herr Baron," he said, with a low bow, "you are welcome as the nightingales in May. Wohlbekommen, Herr Baron!"

"What is that I hear?" cried our host in rebuke. "How often have I told you never to call me by that name! Those days are past for ever, my good Fritz, and it is unkind of you to awaken dead echoes and bring up buried memories. Never let me hear that expression again. Obey me, good Fritz, if you love me."

"I will, I will, Herr Bar—— Santa Maria! I cannot help in Habit is more than second nature."

"He is an old retainer of my father's," said our host, turning to us, "and accords me a title I have not allowed myself to assume for twenty years. But it is a long story, and I have no right to inflict it upon you. Nor under any circumstances would this be the place for a chapter of autobiography. Let us pass on. Close the gate, good Fritz, that neither ghost from the dead nor intruder from the living break in upon our solitude."

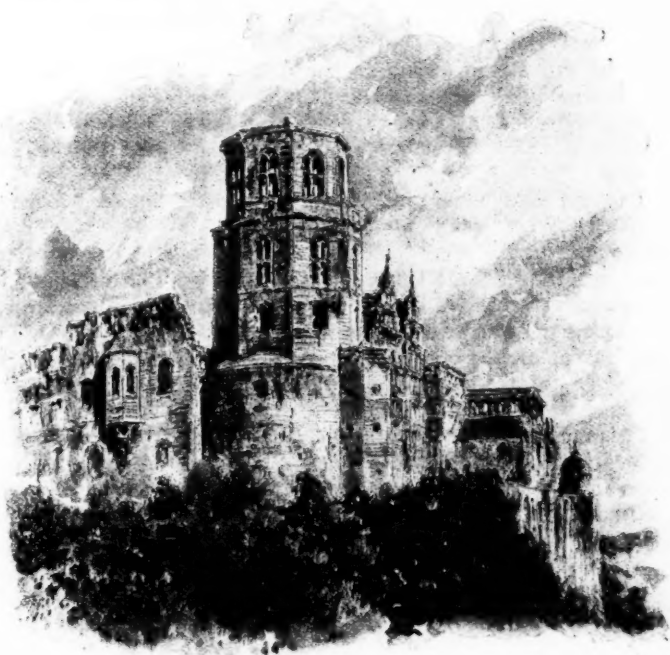
"But, Herr Baron——"

"Fritz!"

"Ach! Ach! Santa Maria! Forgive me, Herr Karl! You see how the past is burnt into my brain! But I was about to observe that it is said ghosts are independent of bars and bolts, and can pass through solid walls."

"Have you seen any ghosts here, Fritz, at the midnight hour?"

"Aye, that have I, Herr Baron—I mean Herr Karl. Aye, that have I: at such time as the nightingales were singing and the owls



THE OCTAGON TOWER.

were calling one to the other. And again, in the dead of night, when not a sound broke upon the death-like stillness of the air."

"And whose ghost was it, my good Fritz?"

"Nay, be not sceptical, Herr Karl; I hear it in the sound of your voice; but as sure as the Castle stands, I have seen the ghost of Elizabeth, wife of the Elector, and Queen of Bohemia. The sad Elizabeth!"

"And where was she, and what doing, good Fritz?"

"Always on the Terrace, Herr Karl, now walking to and fro, now standing still, now looking into the depths and listening."

"Listening to what?"

"To the love songs of that bold student, who became the Trompeter von Säkkingen, for he had to be banished because he so annoyed the Princess Elizabeth with those love songs of his. And you will not believe me, Herr Karl, but I have heard distinctly, floating through the still midnight air, the sound of a trumpet, clear and soft and ghost-like—phantom-music: the notes of the Trompeter von Säkkingen: though why he should come back here with his trumpet, where he never played it in life, I know not. A punishment, perhaps, for having annoyed the princess—whose love, we know, was all given to Frederic."

"Perhaps they will appear to-night," said Herr Karl. "Such a serenade would be enchanting."

"Nay, mein Herr," returned the old custodian; "they will never appear for him of a sceptic spirit. You will have neither ghost nor serenade."

"Then we must put up with the music of the nightingales," laughed Herr Karl. "Let us hasten to the Terrace."

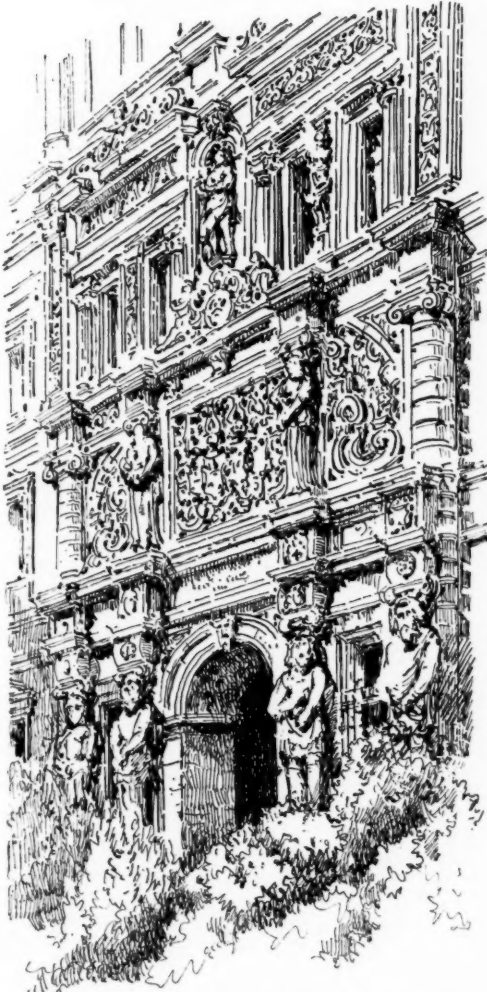
We stood in the great quadrangle. The moon, a few days from the full, had long risen, flooding the romantic spot with silvery light, and tracing long shadows upon the ground. Ruined walls and casements long empty were vividly outlined. It was a marvellous scene.

As we went on, the custodian fell back and allowed us to wander alone. We had the whole place to ourselves, and might have been in a dead world; dead for all but that moon creeping silently upwards, the wondrous nightingales, and the hooting owls. The Terrace was flooded with moonlight. Far down stretched the great plain with its winding rivers. Immediately below us and far above us were the wooded slopes, impenetrable to the moonlight. But the nightingales never ceased their melody, and all amongst the trees floated the fireflies.

And as we stood spell-bound, another far-off sound rose upon the air: human voices rising in a part-song of Mendelssohn's, blending in time and tune, perfectly sung. This died away, and again the nightingales had it all to themselves. Oh, the nightingales! the nightingales! If we live to be a century old, we can never forget that night as we stood on the Terrace of Heidelberg Castle, whilst the clocks below chimed the passing moments, and we were both held fast in the chains of magic.

"I have not been a great traveller," said Herr Karl; "that is one of my many unfulfilled desires; but I cannot conceive anything in nature much more beautiful than this, whether by day or night. There are more extensive views no doubt, but the whole neighbourhood is so historically interesting, every foot of this old castle, of the surrounding woods, is so steeped in Romance, that thoughts and emotions are aroused here few other spots on earth could have power to awaken."

"It would hardly be possible to equal this ruin in Europe," we replied. "Heidelberg Castle is generally admitted to be matchless ;



A DETAIL OF THE OTTO-HEINRICH BUILDING.

but there must be a hundred scenes more beautiful, and, historically, quite as interesting."

"To me, the supreme figure, standing out above all others in connection with Heidelberg castle, is Elizabeth of Bohemia," said

Herr Karl, "with all the pathos of her life ; all the happiness she left behind her when she quitted this magic home, upon which Frederic had bestowed such thought and labour, to become queen. If anyone's ghost could walk here, surely it ought to be hers."

The moon was riding through the sky, pale and glorious ; our shadows were deeply outlined upon the Terrace ; the dark woods were spread around, brilliant with fireflies floating silently about with such a sense of mystery. The song of the nightingales never ceased ; and every now and then the note of the moping owl startled the air, a bird occasionally flying over our heads to a favourite nook in the castle, or to seek its mate in the woods. The town slept below, and nearly all lights were now extinguished.

"The Germans are an early people," said Herr Karl ; "and really it grows late," as he struck his watch—one of the few relics he had preserved of his father. "It is half past eleven—almost the witching hour. The ghost of Elizabeth ought to appear to us."

As he spoke, a trumpet soft and clear rose upon the air, above the songs of the nightingales. We both started. "*Not* the Trompeter von Säckingen," laughed Herr Karl ; "no phantom trumpeter, this ; but a substantial inhabitant of Heidelberg coming down the Neckar from a little distance, where he spends every Sunday in the company of the lady who is shortly to be his wife. You hear what he is playing : Mendelssohn's '*Auf flügeln des gesanges*,' only no doubt he interprets it wings of *Love*. He is very sentimental—it is excusable under the circumstances. The enchanted period comes only once in a lifetime. So perhaps he thinks himself another Trompeter serenading another Elizabeth. I know him well. And what do you think he is, this sentimental lover ? Nothing more or less than a young professor of science at the University, grave and staid who, they say, will have a distinguished career. Nothing is so true as that extremes meet."

The melody came to an end, and the trumpet ceased. Midnight struck upon the air ; the moon was sailing onwards, the stars were travelling. The witching hour had no effect upon the nightingales, who went on with their rapturous song undisturbed by any thought of ghosts. One could have stayed there until daybreak, with no feeling of weariness, so enchanting was the experience ; and we reluctantly turned away.

In the great quadrangle the shadows had all shifted ; the old custodian approached, thin and ghostly in the moonlight.

"We have kept you up, good Fritz," said Herr Karl, slipping a piece of silver into the old man's hand ; "but we wanted to see whether the ghost of Elizabeth or the Phantom Trumpeter would appear to us. We saw and heard nothing ; and you, good Fritz, have a lively imagination."

The old man shook his head. "They will never appear for you, Herr Baron—that is, Herr Karl—you are too sceptical ; but with

these two eyes of mine I have seen Elizabeth not once but many a time at midnight, and with these two ears I have heard the trumpet as no earthly hand ever played it."

We left the old custodian to his opinion, himself so very near the land of shadows that he might well believe in them; the great gate closed behind us; we wended our way downwards amidst the fireflies floating about in countless myriads, whilst the unseen nightingales seemed more full of song and rapture as the night drew on.

"I am glad that you do not want your remedy to-night," said Herr Karl, as we entered his hospitable doors. "Instead of that we will take a bumper of good Rhine wine to chase away the song of the nightingales, and bring a little sleep to the eyes. This is the best wine in my cellar," he said, as he led the way to his sitting-room, where it stood waiting for us, no doubt by previous orders. "It would be a sin to leave a single drop in the bottle. Taken just before going to bed it is infallible as a sleep-beguiler. It was particularly bequeathed to me; I was never to sell a single bottle of it, but keep it for my own special occasions."

We did full justice to this nectar of the Rhine, which Herr Karl had indeed not overrated. Then he accompanied us to our room.

"No other roof must shelter you during your stay in Heidelberg," he observed, as we shook hands and said good-night. "You must promise me that. And I promise on my part that no guest shall be more honoured."

Then Herr Karl departed and gently closed the door behind him. Ere long we were in the land of dreams, where nightingales sang as they never sang before, and owls hooted and called and hissed. We lived over again the hours we spent on the Terrace, and saw Elizabeth in phantom form walking to and fro in the moonlight; then bending and listening to the strains of him who became known as the Trompeter von Säkkingen with a most romantic history. Then it all passed away and we fell into deep oblivion.



BROKEN IDEALS.

BY LADY MARGARET MAJENDIE.

CHAPTER X.

SIR HARRY LOCKE prevailed on his guests to remain a week with him, and during that time, with the most delicate consideration and courtesy, he renewed their wardrobes and some of the luxuries of life, which second nature had made absolute necessities to them.

During these days the most constant companion of their host was Renée. Her bright cheerfulness reasserted itself, and with it returned all her courage. She alone among the exiles realised the extreme gravity of their situation, and she set to work to glean as much experience as she could of this strange country from her new friend.

When, on the last day of their stay at Burnthill, she tried once more to express to him something of the deep gratitude she felt, a sudden sense of what the loneliness and desolation would be in London, when deprived of his help and protection, rushed over her, and she grew very pale. Sir Harry saw it, and advancing to her side he said earnestly :

"Mademoiselle, before we part, I must exact one solemn promise from you. If you are in difficulty, if you want a friend, help, money, advice, anything, you will write to me. You will find me always as I am now, your most faithful and devoted servant."

Unable to speak from her emotion she held out her hand, and he carried it to his lips.

The next morning he accompanied them to the coach. He stood at the window, hat in hand, to see them start, and then he realised for the first time that no woman had ever attracted him as this bright French girl had done, and he returned home with a heavy sigh.

On the evening of the second day the exiles arrived in London and were driven to the inn recommended to them by Sir Harry Locke in the Strand.

They spent the night there in some discomfort, for the rooms were stuffy and airless, and the heavy underdone cooking terrible to them.

On the following morning the two gentlemen, M. de Lagrange and M. de Cavanaugh, went out together in quest of lodgings, and Renée thought it a good opportunity for a little investigation into the financial position of the whole party. She had been a good deal startled by a few words her brother-in-law had said to her before he went out.

"Renée, my dear, I am surprised and astonished to find how little

money I have left. We have been spending a great deal more than we ought."

Renée's eyes had watched the disappearance of each gold piece, but she knew that enough ought to be left to go on with, unless they had fallen in with dishonesty.

Secretly, in dread of arousing the painful nervous terrors of Marie, Renée and Armande examined the bag, and looked into each other's eyes with cold misgiving, for there were but twenty louis d'or left.

M. de Lagrange was proverbially careless about money, and they had travelled far, had been in varying company, and had lain at strange inns. Travelling was always more or less unsafe, and at all events the thieves had had mercy enough on homeless refugees not to take all.

Renée took the money into her own possession, earnestly hoping that the two gentlemen would take the cheapest rooms they could find.

A comparison of resources among the ladies revealed that Génie St. Hilaire and her children had about fifty pounds in cash, and an order from her husband on the correspondent in London of a French house of business in Paris, for the payment of a hundred pounds sterling on the first day of every month.

Comte de Cavanaugh had with him notes and gold worth perhaps a hundred pounds. The women compared their jewellery. Neither Renée nor Marie had much, the latter one diamond ring, and her husband had his gold watch and seals. They did not waste thought on the forgotten valise; they were spared anxiety by the habit of trusting implicitly in Hermon de Courcel.

Armande had escaped with a favourite string of pearls round her throat, and she had a few gold pieces in her inner pocket. Altogether there seemed little to depend upon, except the income for Génie de St. Hilaire.

Renée saw the necessity of making some attempt to earn money at once. Armande, whom she took into her confidence, took up the idea with spirit. In these anxious days she had learnt to cling with warm affection to Renée, and the temporary need of earning money interested and excited her.

Both the girls could embroider, Armande fairly well, Renée exquisitely; and the latter, after careful consideration, judged that to lay in a stock of materials would be money very well spent. So after donning their hoods and making themselves look as quiet and unobtrusive as they could, they ventured out into the streets of London, and succeeded in finding a shop which could supply their needs.

Renée bought for Armande some satin for curtain-bands, and for herself a roll of the fine muslin, then much in fashion, and they returned to the inn chatting gaily, well supplied with ample materials, embroidery silks, needles, bobbins, etc.

The gentlemen arrived soon after them. They came home
VOL. LXVIII. P

thoroughly disheartened. They had seen a great many lodgings, but those that seemed at all promising were far too expensive, the ones within their means dirty and impossible. Many of the landladies refused to have anything to do with them as foreigners—their feelings had been hurt by insolence and ridicule. It was a new and most painful experience, and one very hard to bear with patience.

Renée had mastered a few words of English, and fortunately she had discovered that a Frenchman, who looked like a gentleman's servant, was in the habit of coming to the inn occasionally on chance errands. She asked the chamber-maid to tell this man, whose name was Jules Coutard, that she would be glad to see him the next time he came.

Jules Coutard was an elderly man, and his clothes had arrived at the last stage of shabbiness, but when he came into the room he looked round on the assembled company and bowed with all the grace of a finished *laquais*.

Renée drew him to one side and began to question him as to lodgings and houses, and while doing so, her quick eyes saw that his colour was coming and going strangely, and his hands shaking. Her own anxieties sharpened her perceptions.

"My friend," she said suddenly, "you are hungry?"

The man nodded and his lips quivered.

The remains of the exiles' dinner were on the table: soup, a dish of ham and eggs, some light wine. Renée beckoned Jules into the anteroom, made him sit down, and with her own hands brought the dishes and put them before him.

"Eat first," she said. "Afterwards you can help me."

The poor fellow ate with the zest of one famishing. When the keen pangs of hunger were assuaged, Renée began to draw his history from him. He had fled from France in the service of his master, the Baron St. Jean de Brouais, six months before. They had suffered incredibly in their flight, and had escaped with the greatest difficulty, finally landing in England in an open boat, and fairly begging their way to London. The Baron, old and in feeble health, died within a week of their arrival, and poor Jules alone, friendless, and almost starving, had existed as best he might since.

He was able to advise. He was lodging in a small house at the back of Soho, in a labyrinth of small but dull and respectable streets, and the owner of the house, a widow, was extremely anxious to let it furnished as it stood, and retire to the house of a married daughter. The rent was exceedingly small.

Jules became pathetically eager: "If only the Seigneurie would take this house, he would be their servant, cook, housemaid, everything! They should never repent it, and as for wages, all he asked was food and lodging until better days should come."

Renée thought the idea a good one, and she and M. de Lagrange started at once to see the house with Jules.

They found it better than they expected. It was old-fashioned, standing a little back from the street, with a tiny paved court in front of it, and the front door was high up and approached by a double row of steps meeting on a little platform. Ivy, rather begrimed but still living foliage, climbed all over the façade.

Within, there was a network of little rooms, and one good-sized parlour on the first floor. The heavy moreen-covered furniture was frightful, but the ceilings and cornices, the panelling, and wrought-iron balustrades were all graceful and pretty.

She closed with the offer of the house at once, paying six months' rent in advance, and then M. de Lagrange turned to Jules with a touch of his old manner.

"And now," he said, "perhaps before I engage you to enter my service, you will furnish me with a character?"

The man looked up and the tears rushed to his eyes. "Monseigneur," he said, "I can obtain no recommendation. All I can say is—behold! Am I not here?"

It was true, and these emotional Frenchmen accepted his services at once, and they were well rewarded, for Jules proved a marvel. The savoury dishes he produced out of the scantiest materials, the triumphs of marketing—the care with which he valeted his masters, the way he waited on the ladies. And for Renée he would have lain down his life any day gladly.

CHAPTER XI.

In a small street in a busy quarter of Paris was a little shop with the name of "Achille Goulot, *épiciier*," painted in golden letters outside. The polished brass, bright paint and general smartness made it evident that Achille Goulot took the greatest pride in his surroundings.

It was night, the shops were shut, the very feeble oil-lamp at the corner of the street, gave a smoky red ray of light, and a stranger, picking his way across the street through the rubbish thrown there from every house at will, was obliged to open his lantern and hold it high in air to scan the names and signs over the shops. When he perceived that of Achille Goulot he gave a sigh of relief and proceeded to knock cautiously at the door.

It was some time before his summons produced any effect. Once the night-watchman and a gendarme strolled past, and roughly demanded his name. The answer "Hermon Dol, député," sent them on again with a loud "Good night, citizen."

At length Hermon lost patience and knocked with some violence.

The door was opened a very little way and a man's great round face surmounted with a peaked night-cap looked out with a ludicrous expression of consternation. At the sight of Hermon it changed to unbounded delight; he flung the door open exclaiming:

"You! you, Monsieur Hermon Dol? a thousand welcomes! only come in! What can I do for you? I am altogether at your service, monsieur—I should say—citizen!"

Hermon Dol came in and sat down wearily. He looked thin and haggard, and a deep line between the brows betrayed constant harassing thought and anxiety. He no longer wore the peasant farmer's dress, but a plain brown gentleman's suit, and his long hair had been cut off and now curled closely round his brow. He held out his hand to Achille, and the fat man's little eyes beamed affectionately at him as he clasped it in both his.

"I have come to ask your assistance, Goulot," said Hermon quietly.

"Mine? mine?" cried the man in delight. "At last you will allow me to do something for you. Ah, Monsieur Hermon—citizen, I should say! I have not forgotten how it was that bitter winter when trade was so bad, and my wife and the babe had neither food nor wood, and old Isak was pressing for his money. Yes. *Dame!* we do not forget."

"You are good souls," said Hermon kindly. "It is this: your wife, Achille, is the eldest daughter of Mère Perrine at St. François."

"Yes, yes, from the provinces."

"And her sister Mariette is, I hear, in service. Can you give me her address?"

"Mariette? She is not far to seek. She is here with us."

"With you? Thank Heaven—that is well. Achille, what I seek to know is, what has become of her foster-sister, Mademoiselle Diane de Lagrange. For Heaven's sake, man, tell me if you know. I am at my wits' end; I have done all I can and failed."

"But why is monsieur seeking her?" said Achille cautiously. "Just now it is dangerous to have to do with the *ci-devants*."

"She was left in my charge when her parents went abroad. My honour is concerned and—yes—Achille, I confess it—my heart. My little cousin must be found."

"It is a good plan to call her cousin. Where have you sought her, citizen?"

Hermon described his fruitless search at St. François, at the Presbytère, at the farm, all round the country, finally his journey to Mademoiselle Jeanne's convent which he had found burned down, all the nuns dispersed. He then thought that Diane might probably have tried to join her brother in Paris and had come hither only to find the family "hotel" in the Faubourg empty and sacked, and to hear that that very day Adrien, his dear friend and cousin, had been denounced by his own concierge and removed to the Conciergerie prison.

Achille listened to the whole story, hesitated, scratched his head, and finally burst out: "On your own head rest the responsibility, citizen. I will confess. Mademoiselle Diane——"

"Yes, yes?"

"Is here in Paris and safe."

"Ah, thank God." He covered his face with his hands.

Achille smote himself on the breast in his joy that he had been able to move his friend and benefactor thus.

Hermon looked up. "Safe, you say? In your house? God bless you, Achille, if you have been a good friend to her."

"Mademoiselle Diane and Mariette Perrine arrived here about a fortnight ago, monsieur, travelling as peasant girls with market baskets on their little rough pony. They had met with few adventures and—ha! Do you hear?"

The silence of the night was broken by a strange sound, beginning in the far distance and gradually drawing near, a noise of wild and undisciplined voices hoarse with shouting and yelling, the tramp of heavy feet, the screams of frantic mirth. Nearer and nearer it came, till it seemed as if a blast of foul air rushed down the street, and the roar burst into shrill outcry.

It was one of the wild rushes of the people, and it swept by like a tornado, men and women dancing, screaming, with wild hair and bare arms, torn clothes and bloodshot eyes. They seemed to have some victim in their midst, some miserable human being round whom the mad whirl pressed closely. Seeing this, Hermon Dol rushed to the door and would have gone out, to endeavour in the midst of the clamour to do something for the victim, but Achille Goulot literally pinioned him from behind, so that he could do nothing, and in spite of all he could say, he would not release him until the crowd had swept past, their ravings dying away in the silence of night.

"Are you mad, monsieur?" exclaimed Achille hoarsely; he was panting from the struggle. "You might as well go unarmed into the midst of a pack of starving wolves."

"And I!" exclaimed Hermon, furiously pacing the room: "I, and such as I, helped to unmuzzle these devils!"

Achille rubbed his strained arms. "How could you tell how it would end?" he said sullenly.

"Did you see?" cried Hermon. "It was an old man, I tell you! an old old man."

"Ah, bah! you need not waste pity on strangers," said the man roughly. "If it is an aristocrat he has had a good time through life, and the passage of the lantern is not long. But, Monsieur Hermon, you should leave Paris. You can do no more good and you may be denounced. Sympathy is treason to the people now."

"I cannot go while I have a shred of influence left," said Hermon with a heavy sigh. "Besides, perhaps you have heard—Adrien de Lagrange has been taken."

"I heard," said Achille. "Denounced by his concierge, a good patriot."

"Does Diane know?"

"Yes, and her whole mind is set on seeing him, and how to manage it I do not know."

"She is here? in this house?"

"To-night. To-morrow she moves to the house of *Veuve Tasset*, a cousin of mine in another street, an excellent woman. *Citoyenne Diane* has been helping in her shop—she is a tin-smith—and now *Veuve Tasset* has a room for her, for her daughter has left Paris. My wife cannot bear her presence here; it is not safe. It will be best for her to go."

"Does this *Veuve Tasset* know who she is?"

"Not she. *Citoyenne Diane* talks the *patois* of St. François as easily as *Mariette* herself. She is fond of the old lady and works for her willingly. No one would suspect her of being a *ci-devant*."

"Then you think her safe?" said *Hermon* anxiously.

Achille shook his head.

"I do not say that," he said. "She is as imprudent as yourself. I have heard her abuse the authorities, the sacred will of the Nation! the great men! and since the death of the king one must have no opinions. Heaven protect us all. Besides, my wife——"

"We must get her out of Paris."

"Yes, if it be possible. She has masqueraded so long as a peasant girl that it may not be so difficult if only she can be taught silence. Come, Citizen *Hermon*, do not deny me the pleasure of drinking a drop with me. I have here red wine and cognac. Which will you have?"

"A draught of red wine, my friend," said *Hermon*. He sat leaning his brow on his hand, a look of deep thought on his face.

Achille filled the tall glasses with refreshing light wine, and sat down by his guest comfortably. It was about one o'clock in the morning. After a pause the *épiciér* bent forward and said in a low voice:

"Comte de Floriat is dead!"

Hermon started.

"De Floriat? When? But he was one of us!—we who call ourselves the friends of the people."

"His sympathy with us failed," said *Achille* grimly. "And after all he was not like you. He was an aristocrat by birth—masquerading."

The dark colour stole into *Hermon's* face.

"Who denounced him?" he said quickly.

"I did."

"You?"

"Yes," said the *épiciér* quietly. "You see, when I was actually sheltering a *ci-devant* under my roof, it was necessary to give a proof of zeal, and de Floriat was opposing everything."

"I understand; but I thought you knew and everyone knew what a fine fellow he was."

"Yes, but his day was over—better exterminate the whole brood. The wife went with him."

"To the guillotine?"

"Yes."

Hermon started up, struggling to conceal the bitterness of his feelings.

"Can I save Adrien?" he exclaimed.

"You know best. You had better lie quiet for a time. There are a great many to come before him. There is time."

"You advise me not to work it through my friends in power?"

"Listen, citizen," cried Achille. "What plea can you use? Who is this Adrien? The son of a well-known *émigré*. Has this young man ever done anything in his life to redeem the crime of his birth? Bah! you have nothing to say."

"But does it go for nothing that no gentler, nobler soul ever existed? That his life has been one of unstained honour, of quiet studious habits?"

"Well, you may plead all that later on. We all know your golden tongue! The people yield sometimes to sentiment. There is your chance; it is a slender one, only wait; now you will only bring suspicion on yourself."

Hermon made a contemptuous gesture.

"But what in that case would become of Citoyenne Diane?" added the man quickly.

Hermon sank back into his seat; the argument was unanswerable.

CHAPTER XII.

AN hour later Hermon Dol let himself out into the street, lantern in hand. The moon had risen, and the houses threw shadows black as ink across the road.

Hermon passed over into the shadow—it was wiser to walk on the shadow side in those troubled times. He ran full against a man who was standing watching the house of Achille Goulot. He raised his lantern, and the two men recognised each other. The watcher was a gendarme much trusted by his superiors, Laudret by name. He took off his hat, murmuring:

"It is you, Citizen Hermon Dol! You can doubtless give me the information I want."

"All that is in my power," he answered, secretly grinding his teeth.

"I have been desired to watch that house," said Laudret confidentially. "The owner, Goulot, was becoming 'suspect,' and would have been arrested but for the fact that two or three days ago he showed his true and honest patriotism by denouncing a miserable pair of *ci-devants*."

"Then why do you still watch him?" said Hermon sharply.

The man nodded mysteriously.

"Because it seems that for the last two weeks two strange women

have been lodging there, and he has not notified their arrival and shown their papers at his section, as commanded by the authorities."

"I know them and can speak for them."

"Yes," said the man doubtfully, "but still——"

"My word should be enough," said Hermon haughtily. "Am I not a true patriot?"

"That we shall see as time goes on. Patriots do not think for themselves."

"And yet," said Hermon bitterly, "the only object of this popular movement has been to secure liberty of thought."

The man scratched his head angrily.

"Anyhow, I am here to do my duty," he said, "and we must find out all about these women."

"The one," said Hermon, "is Mariette Perrine, the sister of Achille Goulot's wife, and daughter of worthy Veuve Perrine of the Moutonnerie farm at St. François."

"We know about that one," said Laudret, with a wink. "It is the other girl, the fair-haired one whom she treats like a princess."

"I can answer for her also. I have known her from a child, she is a fervent patriot and friend of the people. She is also in service and most attentive to her duty."

"Yes, but Veuve Tasset has been warned that she will get into trouble herself if she harbours a 'suspect' without papers."

"Who is your informant?"

"A trustworthy lad, Achille Goulot's boy of twelve. He is in training for a *mouchard*, that little imp!"

"And you make use of the rascal against his own father?"

"*Peste!* these things are done for the good of the people. If this girl turns out to be a *ci-devant* in disguise, I for one will have no mercy on Achille Goulot. I hate such hypocrites."

"You will find yourself mistaken," said Hermon Dol drily. "And now, good night."

He strode off down the street.

The next morning before daylight Hermon Dol returned to the *épicier's* house. The street was empty; the spy, apparently satisfied with what he had heard, had disappeared, and he reached the door unobserved.

He had not closed his eyes that night; he had spent the long sleepless hours in turning over and over again in his mind schemes for securing the safety of his little cousin.

His cautious knock at the door brought the stolid rosy Mariette, who opened it under the impression that an early customer had appeared, and admitted him.

It was only five o'clock but all the family were astir. Achille and his little brown wife in her pretty frilled cap were busy setting out the shop, polishing tins and weights and measures, while in the background at a high desk surrounded by a little brass railing, sat a

little figure with masses of curly fair hair breaking out from under the muslin of her peasant *coif*, and a necklace of blue beads round her throat. She was bending down, earnestly engaged with the shop accounts, and she did not look up until Hermon Dol had advanced to her *caisse* and was close to her. When she saw him she leaped off the high seat with a little cry of joy and ran to him with both hands out.

"Maitre Hermon! It is indeed you!" she cried. "Ah, how I have wondered whether I should ever see you again. Oh, come—come at once into the parlour; I have so much to ask you."

Hermon kissed the little eager hands, crying—

"You do not know, little *citoyenne*, what it is to find you here and safe. I have suffered tortures!"

"Hush! Say no more till we are alone," she said, leading the way into the family sitting-room at the back of the house.

As they left the shop there was a little commotion; an impish-looking lad with a shaved head and black bullet-eyes was creeping towards the door, when he was caught suddenly by his sister.

"Where are you going, Jeanniot? You shall not leave the house!"

The boy kicked at her vehemently, but she was strong. Throwing her stout arms round him, she dragged him into the kitchen, exclaiming:

"See, my father, forbid Jeanniot to go out; he will not obey me!"

Achille collared the boy and shook him. "Me at least he shall obey!"

"Very well," said the boy sullenly. "Then I shall enjoy seeing you also guillotined!"

His father cuffed him till he howled, while the little brown mother interposed angrily.

"So you love strangers better than your own flesh and blood, great goose that you are!" she screamed to her husband. "To hit the poor child thus, for nothing."

"He shall obey!"

"I will denounce you!" cried the boy. "Who conceals aristocrats? Who helped her to escape? Who is no patriot—yah!"

He fixed his teeth in his father's hand so sharply that the man shook him off, and in a second the boy twisted round under his arm, slid away and was gone. Achille raged and stormed. Mariette burst into tears.

In the inner room Diane sat by the table and Hermon leaned his elbow on the tall stove and looked down upon her.

"Little Diane," he said, with strong feeling vibrating in his voice, "I thought I had lost you!"

"It would have been far safer for you if we had never met again," she said earnestly. "But, oh, Hermon, I cannot regret it. I am so deeply thankful that you are here. You will help me, I know. I

cannot stay here any longer, endangering my poor friends in this house. I have a misgiving that Veuve Tasset is becoming nervous. She told me that there was a man watching her shop all yesterday afternoon. I will not bring danger on my friends. But now you have come, and oh, Hermon, you will take care of me? I have no one but you! You have heard about Adrien?"

"Yes, I have heard," he answered sorrowfully. "I will do all I can for him, but nowadays one dare not even hope."

"I did my best," she said, looking up into his face with strained tearless eyes. "I planned his escape. I saw him several times, but it was of no use. There was only one joy which used to brighten up his dear grave face; it was that Armande de Cavanaugh had escaped in safety."

"Ah, poor Adrien!"

"They can't hurt him, Hermon, can they? So good, so young and gentle. He never hurt a fly in his life. You don't really think they can hurt him?"

He shook his head, he could not trust himself to speak.

"And now will you tell me about the others? Have you heard anything?"

"I heard from Matterbes, Diane. Your father and mother and Mademoiselle Renée have all safely sailed, but——"

"You do not mention Eustache?"

"Eustache did not go with them."

"Then where is he? Did he return to Paris? I should be glad to see him again. I did so hate him, Hermon, and——"

"Hush, dear, do not say that now. If Eustache did wrong he expiated his sin. You must forgive him, Diane."

"Then he is dead?" she said softly.

"Yes, Diane, his body was washed up on the shore, close to the little harbour at Matterbes, shot through the heart. The rough fishermen were sorry for him, and buried him tenderly."

She hid her face, trembling so violently that he put his arm round her, and she clung to him. Presently she looked up with quivering lips, whispering:

"Hermon, I hope they will not hurt Adrien!"

"We must pray, Diane," he said softly.

"Yes, we must pray very hard." She sat up and pushed back her hair. "I won't cry, Hermon," she said. "There will be time enough for that afterwards, and now we must think. I won't ask you to go away and leave me, for the sake of safety, for you would not do it, and though I thought I could do without you, I find that I cannot."

"No, my little Diane, no."

"Then what shall we do?" she said childishly.

"We must somehow get out of this hell upon earth," he exclaimed fiercely.

"Yes, but not so long as you have any power or influence, Hermon! I hear that even now the people listen to you."

"Even now, it is true. But the torture of my position is sometimes unbearable," he exclaimed. "I—I to be accounted friend—accomplice of these fiends upon earth! I to be supposed to countenance their hideous crimes, and agree in their vile blasphemies. I, who have hoped, and schemed, and believed in truth and liberty. Grand Ciel! how shall I bear it?"

She shivered and sat looking up at him with a white face.

At that moment there came a fierce imperative knock at the door, and Achille Goulot burst in. "The gendarmes are here," he exclaimed, "and half a dozen scoundrels with them. Remember, Hermon Dol, you have promised to stand my friend, even if it comes to——" and he glanced at Diane significantly.

Hermon saw the look and spoke sternly. "I protect those who are faithful to their trust, and those only, Achille Goulot."

The knocking without was repeated, and Achille went to the door. His great round face was pale, almost green, and his knees knocked together.

Madame Goulot stood in the background. She had suddenly placed a red cap of liberty on her head, and stood with her arms akimbo.

Hermon measuring the chances of safety for his charge in their surroundings, saw danger in her eyes. He braced up his nerves and waited.

CHAPTER XIII.

As Goulot unlocked the door it burst open, and the shop seemed to fill with people headed by four gendarmes, one of whom Hermon recognised as Laudret, his friend of the night before.

He doffed his hat.

"Good morning, citizens," he said politely. "It is surely early for your visit."

"It is never too early to be awake in the service of the Nation," said Laudret shrilly, his thin weasel-like face yellow with want of sleep.

Martha Goulot the wife came forward obsequiously, saying:

"Our house is open at all times to inspection, citizens, and we shall be proud to obey your orders. We are good patriots. Achille, these citizens will take a drop of brandy to keep out the cold of dawn."

Laudret pushed her rudely aside and seated himself on the counter, his legs dangling.

"To business, Citizen Achille," he began. "I have come to inspect the papers of every member of your family."

"At your service, citizen," said Achille, and still shaking in every limb he opened a deep drawer, and drew out a greasy pocket-book.

Laudret swung his legs and inspected it.

"These are not all," he said suddenly, "there are two strangers in this house."

"One only, citizen," cried Marthe Goulot shrilly. "The other is my only sister Mariette Perrine, as good a girl——"

"Desire your wife to be silent. We do not deal with women in matters of business," said Laudret.

Marthe Goulot cried loudly. "After all, that remains to be seen, citizens," and Laudret suddenly became more respectful. Women were not to be trifled with.

"If it is your sister, citoyenne, point her out to me, and she shall have her papers made out for her. What is her name, age, occupation, and place of residence?"

"Mariette," began the woman, but Laudret silenced her again.

"Let the girl speak for herself," he said roughly.

Mariette, who was standing in the background, came forward and answered modestly.

"My name is Mariette Perrine, age eighteen, occupation 'fermière,' place of residence La Moutonnerie, St. François."

"And the girl who came to Paris in your company?"

Diane came slowly forward.

"Permit me to answer for myself," she said.

"Name, age, occupation, residence?"

"My name is Marie Diane, my age seventeen, my occupation servant in a shop, place of residence Paris."

At the sight of the speaker, even the rough crowd felt a momentary check. She looked so pretty and young, so different from the stout peasant girl, that the difference of race was incontestable.

"Where were you before you came to Paris?"

"At La Moutonnerie, St. François."

Laudret grunted.

"This will not do, citoyenne," he said. "I must know who your parents are, and why you are here masquerading as a servant?"

Marthe Goulot sprang forward, but Achille caught her with no gentle hand, and for the first time Hermon Dol advanced. His voice and manner were very quiet, but the glint of his long blue eyes was like the glint of steel.

"Citizens," he said, "I claim the right to explain matters. This citoyenne's parents were good folks of St. François, of a higher grade than the peasants who form the population."

"Name, name!" cried the men angrily. "You are mocking us, député."

"The name," said Hermon slowly, "the name of her father was Henri Eustache Marquis de Lagrange."

"Ah!"

It was a loud shout of triumph; two gendarmes detached themselves from the group and took their places on each side of the dignified little figure, who stood with tightly clasped hands and flashing eyes between them.

Hermon Dol was as white as death, he was about to play his last card. He strode forward violently.

"Stand back," he said, "and hear me out. In all France there has been no patriot truer than this delicate young girl. For the sake of the people whom she loved she forfeited her chance of safety. She refused to emigrate with her parents." He glanced at the faces around him, they were scowling, relentless. "And to crown all she has entrusted her safety to a member of the Convention, to one elected by the people, and I have sworn to be true to so noble a confidence." Still no mercy in the hard faces. "And before noon to-day, citizens, she will be my wife."

Then the fierce temper changed and there was a roar of applause, the women burst into mingled tears and laughter, the men clapped Hermon Dol heavily on the shoulder. Only Diane herself drew back and stood against the black wood door behind her, with clenched teeth and wild defiant eyes.

Achille emerged from the corner and began to explain with hysterical volubility that he had known it all along, that there was no one in the world like Hermon Dol, the firmest friend, the truest patriot, that for his sake he would risk his very life.

While these effusions were still going on, Laudret put his hand on Hermon's shoulder and drew him to one side.

"One word with you, Dol," he said. "I am sorry for this entanglement. It will not be to your advantage to marry an aristocrat, and moreover the daughter of an *émigré*."

"I am well known," said Hermon, shrugging his shoulders contemptuously. "And mark you, citizen, we who are leaders can afford to please ourselves, and, moreover, occasionally to make use of our power."

The man drew back pale and cringing.

"We all know your influence," he said obsequiously. "If you can accomplish the wedding to-day, and will apply for your papers about six o'clock, they shall be ready."

He was interrupted by shouts from the men.

"Speak to us, Hermon Dol, speak!"

Hermon smiled and nodded. He stood before them all with his arms folded, a noble spirited figure, and began. Well did they know the ringing silver sound of their favourite orator's voice. Sated as they were with violence and reckless lack of discipline, the words that fell on their ears were like a drink from a cold mountain spring after fiery draughts of coarse alcohol. Hermon Dol spoke to them of peace, of plentiful and happy homes, of men rich with hard-earned liberty rising from serfdom into noble wealth, of the strength of

discipline, the responsibility of power, finally of the highest privilege of the victorious—to show mercy.

The picture was beautiful, showed forth in golden words. The listeners broke into maudlin tears, they hugged him and embraced him as he ceased. The ringing words touched their sentiment, but as he knew and realised himself with a bitter sigh, he might as well have tried to stop the flood when the sluice-gates stood open.

The tears and laughter and embraces ceased at last, and the little crowd trooped off, leaving the house with loud talk and clatter.

Then Achille Goulot turned his pale face on his guest and clasped his hands, exclaiming :

"You see, citizen, dear citizen, you see the fearful position in which we are placed. You have stopped these fiends from denouncing us this time, but it cannot go on. For you yourself I would risk all, but for Heaven's sake, take the girl away !"

"I say more," cried Marthe Goulot, shaking her fingers in the air. "I say, out she must go at once ! I, at least, am a good patriot."

"Diane," said Hermon quietly, "will you do me the honour of allowing me to speak to you alone for five minutes in yonder room ; after which, my good friends," he added, looking round, "we will relieve you of our company."

He handed Diane to the door, threw it open, and stood back as she passed him into the inner room. Before following her he said to Mariette : "Have the goodness, citoyenne, to put together any little parcel Mademoiselle may wish to take with her. It will be better for her to be dressed as a 'bourgeoise' rather than a peasant girl now, and any expense Madame Goulot may incur shall be paid double."

He went in. Diane stood in the middle of the room, her little figure drawn up to its fullest height, her eyes literally blazing with terror and resolution, her heart beating madly.

Hermon stood before her silent for one moment, then he said very gently : "Diane, I am so very sorry for you. Can you forgive me ? There was no other way of saving you. I would not have given up your name, but that I knew that they knew it already. Forgive me ; it is a rough wooing, my little sweetheart, but——"

Diane raised her clasped hands. "It shall not be," she exclaimed. "I will not accept your sacrifice ! Let me go to Adrien. Hermon, it will soon be over then."

She covered her face with one hand, but he gently took the other between his. He made her sit down, and kneeling on one knee, he said : "Listen, Diane, and try to forget all that passed in the other room. Remember only this, that I ask you to be my wife because with all my heart and soul I love you, and, God helping me, I will take care of you, if you will love me too."

"Hermon, Hermon, are you speaking the truth ? Is it not only that you may save my life ? Do not deceive me. Shall I not bring you also into deadly danger ?"

Hermon gazed at her with a strange look of care in his blue eyes. "Listen, my little love," he said; "the danger is here, round us everywhere. It is in every breath we draw. If we would be safe we must float with the tide, burn, denounce, destroy; if we hold back, the fury will pass over us, and God knows whether we shall not be crushed and ground to atoms! You are not my danger; a thousand times no! The danger lies in myself, in my own principles, desires and limitations. Do you understand, my sweet?"

"Yes, Hermon, I understand. Your own noble words made me know and understand; and if—if it must come, it will be worth dying for."

"Yes, Diane, it will be worth dying for."

Diane put her arms round his neck and raised her sweet little face to his. "You will let me stay with you then? I will try to be a good wife, and though I cannot help you in your great work, it will be an honour to share your danger."

He could not speak, he could only clasp her in his arms and kiss her fair soft hair, for about him came the cruel pitiless sense of the terrible peril in which they stood, and the fact that his own actions, his own life must daily, hourly endanger both their lives.

Diane looked up bravely into his anguished eyes.

"Courage, Hermon," she said. "We must be brave. After all, if it has to come, will it not for you be martyrdom?"

He straightened himself and threw back his broad shoulders. "Yes, Diane," he said, "you are right—we must be brave."

An hour later they emerged together from a Registrar's office, where by the proper officials they were made man and wife. They walked away, and as they went Hermon had time to tell her his plans. He was going to take her to a quiet suburban house which he had bought for his mother where they would all live together. They would be able to secure a religious marriage, for a little secret congregation of faithful souls was concealing a nonjuror priest in the neighbourhood.

He sketched out the quiet life they would lead; when he was occupied with his duties she would be safe with his mother. Then with hesitation he confessed to her his real name, and to his astonishment and strange relief he found that she was not surprised.

There had been flashes of vague recollection from her early baby days, waves of recognition, certain characteristics of gentle breeding incompatible with the character he had assumed.

Diane had been through so much, it seemed to her that she never again could be astonished by anything.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was still early in the afternoon when Hermon Dol, having secured all the necessary papers, brought his weary little bride to his mother's house. She looked very little like a bride in the simple bourgeoisie dress improvised by Marthe and Mariette—a dark-blue gown with a large white fichu crossed on her breast, and a white muslin cap on her fair curly hair, over which she wore a black hood lined with rose-coloured taffeta reaching to the waist. She wore dark-blue stockings and neat high-heeled shoes, and she carried a little bundle containing a very few possessions. They drove a long way in a rickety old hired coach, and Diane felt very tired and forlorn.

The house stood back from the wide street of Antellis; it was in the midst of a pleasant little old-fashioned garden enclosed by a high square wall. There was an air of quiet peace about it which was comforting. The only entrance to the place (which must at one time have been conventual) was a small heavy door in the outer wall; and on this door, according to the regulation, the names of the inhabitants of the house were written. They were only two, Hermon Dol, député, and Merline Dol, veuve, his mother.

Diane gave a little gasp of relief when she saw that there was no servant whatever. Hermon had already prepared the necessary addition, and, before opening the door with his pass-key, he added her name, so that it stood thus: "Hermon Dol, député, Diane Dol, his wife, Merline Dol, veuve, his mother." Then he opened the door and led her in.

She looked round with pleasure, for the little garden was pleasantly shaded by various trees, and, although leafless now, they were a welcome sight. Under one of them there was a garden-bench.

"My Diane," said Hermon gently, "will you rest here while I go to my mother and prepare her for your arrival? I will not be long."

Diane sank down. It was not cold, but dry and still, and she was very tired. There was a gentle twittering of winter birds in the leafless branches. Hermon bent over her hand and kissed it gently before he left her, thinking sorrowfully how very white and thin the little face was, how wistful the bright eyes he had first seen and loved when brilliant with impetuous life.

He seemed to be away a long time, although it was but seven minutes. The sounds in the neighbourhood were peaceful enough; opposite, on the other side of the road, was a carpenter's shop and yard. She could hear the tap of a hammer and the grating of saws, a cock crowed shrilly, children laughed and played in the gutter, far away the sounds of the great angry city were rolled into an ominous deep roar.

Presently a high narrow window on the ground-floor opened, and a

tall slender woman came swiftly out. A sudden fit of shyness overwhelmed Diane; she could not raise her eyes. She came blindly forward with outstretched hands, and then a voice sounded in her ears: "My child, my poor little one, how you must have suffered!" and she found herself clasped in warm arms, while the most loving kisses were showered on her face and hair, and she nestled to the motherly tenderness she had never known.

After this reception Madame Merline could not make enough of her new-found daughter. She took her indoors, and put before her and her son all the provisions she could find ready—a cold chicken, and salad, and *vin ordinaire*—and while she ate, Diane was able shyly to look up at her mother-in-law.

She saw a woman a good deal taller than her countrywomen are wont to be, slight and graceful, dressed in a black gown covered with a large muslin apron, a kerchief crossed on her shoulders, on her head a little pointed hood, under which thick grey hair was drawn back. She wore no ornament save a plain black wooden cross which hung at her side with a bunch of household keys and a pair of large scissors. The face was very worn and colourless; but the brown, deep-set eyes had in them a look of such peace and love that little Diane's heart went out to her at once and for ever.

"You must be hungry, my children! When did you eat last?" she exclaimed, looking from one to another; and they found out forthwith that they had eaten nothing that day. Mariette had thrust a piece of currant-bread into Diane's pocket as she tearfully bade her farewell; but she had been too much preoccupied to remember it, and there it was untouched.

Madame Merline coaxed and persuaded Diane to eat; and when she had succeeded, she left the two together, while she went into the little kitchen and made some coffee.

Diane looked up with glistening eyes. "I love your mother already, Hermon," she said.

"Ah, sweetheart, what a joy you will be to her! There is but one drawback—together, you will make life too precious to me."

After a time Hermon was obliged to leave them and go out. He must show himself in Paris and attend to his usual work. Meanwhile Diane and her new mother learned to know each other, and the little bride insisted upon taking her share of the household tasks.

When Madame Merline went out to do a little necessary shopping, Diane remained at home in an agony of nervous dread, counting the moments until her return; but nobody came to the house; it was protected by the name of the popular orator and député.

Hermon returned home about eight o'clock, but not to rest. He had made an arrangement with his friend the nonjuror priest to meet him and his bride in the tiny chapel of a neighbouring cemetery, there to give them the marriage blessing, about eleven o'clock that night.

Madame Merline could not accompany them, for fear of attracting suspicion, and it was well that she should be at home in case of need.

When the hour came the mother stood at the door and bade them Godspeed, while Diane clung to her passionately, hardly able to face with courage this strange secret wedding in the little chapel of the dead.

Hermon, holding her cold little hand fast in his, led her by the most roundabout ways, through small obscure streets and alleys, and finally out on to an open space where a flood of moonlight touched the white tombs of the Cimetière, and a tall cross threw a jet black shadow to their very feet.

The tiny mortuary chapel was faintly lighted by one hanging lamp in a ruby glass, and here the tired and hunted priest was waiting for them, and in ten minutes the young couple knelt together, made man and wife by the holy blessing of the Church.

It was hardly over when Hermon sprang to his feet, listening intently.

"Quick, father, quick!" he exclaimed. "Do you hear the drums? They are again patrolling the streets and making domiciliary visits."

The Father had rapidly resumed his disguise—a peasant's ordinary dress and long flowing hair.

"Hermon," said Diane quickly, "we are safest here, but you must not be found with us. Go and join them. We will not move till they have searched everywhere, even this chapel. If you wish to save us, go."

"Right!" exclaimed the priest, and Hermon nodded and disappeared. He did not trust himself to speak.

It was very dark. Obeying a little sign from Diane, she and the disguised Father knelt down side by side in prayer. The roll of drums and sound of rough voices drew nearer. They could hear Hermon's voice speaking loud and clearly.

"Good night to you, citizens. On duty so late? You give yourselves no rest."

"We have nearly finished for to-night, Hermon Dol," cried a loud coarse voice. "Only one turn round the Cimetière. There was a rumour afloat that Père Martin was hidden somewhere in this direction."

"Father Martin, my friends? Surely it was he who was taken in the Batignolles yesterday and lodged in the Abbaye. Could that be your man?"

"Martin? Was a Martin taken? Good! Then our work is done."

The seekers were upon them now. Someone threw the light of a torch into the dark little chapel, illuminating the two figures bowed in prayer. Diane rose hurriedly to her feet and curtsied, speaking in the country *patois* she knew so well.

"Good evening, citizens. My brother here is stone deaf, afflicted from his birth, or he would also salute you."

"What are you doing here at this time of night, girl?"

Diane crossed herself.

"We visit our dead, citizens. The plague of small-pox has been busy among us in our poor family; my brother has had it, but I have escaped, and——" but the questioners had drawn back with angry oaths. They dispersed hurriedly enough, and their footsteps rapidly died away in the distance.

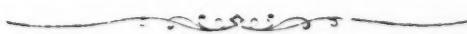
Neither Diane nor the Father dared to move until about ten minutes later Hermon Dol stole noiselessly back. He could not conceal his admiration of Diane's courage and ready wit.

All had been previously arranged; a faithful friend, a washer-woman of the neighbourhood was waiting at the corner of the street to conduct the priest to a fresh hiding-place, and Hermon and Diane returned home through the circuitous streets and lanes he knew so well.

Madame Merline was waiting in an agony of suspense and terror to let them in. During their absence the police had been there, had searched the house from garret to cellar, broken open locks, and thrown out papers and books. They had found nothing compromising or even suspicious, and had gone off laughing good-humouredly.

Hermon Dol was furious, and, knowing that now his best chance lay in the boldness of his game, he determined the next morning to lodge a serious complaint against the indignity.

(To be continued.)



THE GREAT BIRTHDAY.

"For a short time thy sun is overcast;
 But thou shalt once resee't more bright than ever,
 And that same day, which here thou think'st thy last,
 Is a new birthday to be ended never."

Joshua Sylvester.

THE comparison of death with birth has ever been a favourite one among poets, and always with a balance of praise in favour of the sterner-seeming function.

"If death be like as birth, and birth as death,
 The first was fair—more fair should be the last,"

reflects Swinburne. A saying paralleled by the practical-minded Benjamin Franklin: "Life is rather a state of embryo, a preparation for life. A man is not completely born until he has passed through death." Charles Wesley thus forcibly presents the idea:—

"When from flesh the spirit freed
 Hastens homeward to return,
 Mortals cry, A man is dead,
 Angels sing, A child is born."

Death, says the Swedish poet, Bishop Tegnér (as translated by Longfellow), takes the soul, rocks and kisses it to sleep, and then "places the ransomed child, new-born, 'fore the face of its Father."

What a sweet fancy is Rossetti's, of the Virgin Mother, Mary, and her handmaidens, sitting together in Paradise:

"Into the fine cloth, white like flame,
 Weaving the golden thread,
 To fashion the birth-ropes for them
 Who are just born, being dead."

When death is thus considered, merely as the birth into a larger life, the event of its arrival should have in it nothing fearful. And though, generally speaking, we have no more choice in the date of our "birthday to eternity," to use Ben Jonson's phrase, than in that of our entrance upon this mortal scene, yet the period on which they personally would choose it to fall has been made by many a matter of pleasing speculation.

It is through the lips of the Hermit of his "Chronicles of Clovernook" that Douglas Jerrold exclaims of a sunset hour in spring.

"Evenings such as this . . . seem to me the very holiday time of death; an hour in which the slayer, throned in glory, smiles benevolently down on man. Here, on earth, he gets hard names among us for the unseemliness of his looks, and the cruelty of his

doings; but in an hour like this, death seems to me loving and radiant—a great bounty, spreading an immortal feast, and showing the glad dwelling-place he leads men to . . . so considered, death is indeed a solemn beneficence—a smiling liberator, turning a dungeon door upon immortal day.”

To Coleridge death in summer appeared in the same alluring guise. To give out one's spirit “amidst flowers, and the sight of meadowy fields, and the chant of birds” seemed to him a fate so desirable that it would be “a reward for life.” He died in July. It was with something of the same longing for spirit-communion with the summer that the New England poet, Bryant, fixed on June for the time of his death, Bryant who loved nature so well, and who held that the soul is permitted to linger awhile about the scene of its late dwelling.

It was in the balmy days of spring that Keble longed to change his mortal to divine. Of these days, too, did Mrs. Hemans say that if she could choose her time to die, it should be then. The pensive poetess was another of those whose fancies in this matter were realized. It was in May that, as one of her biographers writes, “she passed quietly away to the Better Land of which she had so touchingly written.”

May not this sigh for death in spring, or in sweet summer days, come from the consciousness that all the glory of renewed life around us, all the new-born loveliness of nature, is doomed to decay, and from the passionate craving that it might be eternal, and oneself eternal with it? Some such suggestion is in George MacDonald's lines—

“OF ONE WHO DIED IN SPRING.

Loosener of Springs, he died by thee!
Softness, not hardness, sent him home;
He loved thee—and thou mad'st him free
Of all the place thou camest from!”

Thomas Overbury tells of his “fair and happy milkmaid” that “all her care is she may die in the spring-time,” though only for the expressed reason (a pretty one) “that she may have store of flowers stuck upon her winding-sheet.”

A directly opposite sentiment is expressed by the Dorset poet, William Barnes, in his rapturous May poem. He would not quit this earth so long as the “mother o' blossoms” holds her festival in fields and woods:

“Oh! when, at last, my fleshly eyes
Shall shut upon the fields an' skies,
Mid Zummer's zunny days be gone,
An' winter's clouds be comen on;
Nor mid I draw upon the e'th, (earth)
O' thy sweet air my leatest breath
Alassen I mid want to stay
Behine' for thee, O flow'ry May!”

The words of Guilford to Lady Jane Grey in Webster's "Famous History of Sir Thomas Wyatt" expresses the general feeling that it would be easier to pass away in one of nature's serene and sunny moods:

"The sky is calm, our deaths have a fair day,
And we shall pass the smother on our way."

"An awfu' nicht for me to be fleeing through the air!" exclaimed an old Scotch woman, dying in a tempest. With a kindred thought a young mother in one of Miss Phelps' stories, watching by her dying child, looks out into the stormy dark, with the pitiful reflection, "What a night for a baby to go out in"—as if Heaven would not be ready at once to receive its own!

The story is told of the Rev. Dr. Sheridan, grandfather of Richard Brinsley, that, as he sat in a friend's house one autumn evening, the conversation having turned on the force and direction of the wind, he remarked, "Let the wind blow east, west, north or south, the immortal soul will take its flight to the destined point," and leaning back in his chair, immediately expired. As one might almost think to verify his words.

To some there is a wild attraction in the thought of mingling with the winds of heaven at their fiercest. Miss Muloch speaks, through one of her characters, of the old Scottish superstition that such winds are sent to call away souls, and expresses the longing to be set free amid the raging of the elements, and, as the psalm has it,

"On the wings of mighty winds
Go flying all abroad."

One of the most striking instances of the fixing of one's desire on a special date for death is that of Sir Thomas More who, having been condemned to death by the axe, set his heart on the execution taking place on St. Thomas' eve. In a letter written the preceding day from the Tower, with a piece of coal, to his dearly beloved daughter (as his son-in-law, William Roper, her husband, records), he thus expresses this fervent wish of his to die on the morrow: "I cumber you, good Margaret, much, but I would be sorry if it should be any longer than to-morrow. For to-morrow is St. Thomas' even, and the Octave of St. Peter, and therefore to-morrow long I to go to God, that were a day very meet and convenient for me."

And so it fell. It was the next morning that he was led to the scaffold, he sending beforehand, of the little money that was left him, one angel of gold to his executioner, as to the agent of his release. "So passed Sir Thomas More out of this world to God," says Roper, "upon the very same day in which himself had most desired."

'Twas a harsh delivery, yet not so harsh but that his joyous hopes converted it into a happy one.

It was Dean Alford who uttered the characteristic wish :

"I have often thought I should like to die on a Sunday evening, after the services of the day; the change would be so small. The world sounds so distant to-night . . . Our rooms, and our furniture, and our fire-place and its bright living inhabitant, all seem only as the cabin of the ship in which we are taking our voyage. Now at other times I find myself hammering away at this cabin, painting it and gilding it, as if I were to be in it for ever. But on these evenings I am lifted out of it altogether. I can sit in it, and think on the haven where I would be."

These fanciful preferences for particular times to die in will fasten on the very day, the very hour.

"Oh, let me die at dawn!"

sang in his youth James Smetham, the artist friend of Ruskin and Rossetti,—

"The stir of living men
Would call my waving spirit back
Unto its home again.
* * *

Let me go forth alone,
Before the sun uprise,
And meet the springing of the morn
In its own distant skies."

The wish recalls the concluding lines of Hood's beautiful poem on the death of his sister Anne,—

"For when the morn came dim and sad,
And chill with early showers,
Her quiet eyelids closed—she had
Another morn than ours."

It is also in a poem on the death of a sister ("My Sister's Sleep") that Rossetti, describing how "Margaret's" longed-for slumber deepened into death, tells how, it being Christmas morn, the watchers, with the thought in mind of Him whose birth had hallowed that gracious time, knelt and prayed,—

"Christ's blessing on the Newly-Born!"

For all these fanciful predilections for special days and hours, death still remains the great surprise of life.

Will it befall in summer or in winter, by day or night, in sunshine or in tempest? to the survivors the date will be an anniversary of death; to the delivered soul but of a brighter birth.

Of the new-born infant, Wordsworth says that it is flung forth upon earth's tender mercies,

"Like a shipwreck'd sailor tost
By rough waves on a perilous coast."

—In what beautiful contrast is Joseph Beaumont's account of the soul's celestial birth:—

"Sweet Death, so let me call thee so, thy hand
Alone can bring our shipwreck'd souls to land :
Thou, with this stormy life compar'd,
More calm, more sweet, more lovely art.
The graves thou ope'st are but the gates
Of blest and everlasting Fates,
Through which our dying life doth pass to be
Born in a surer birth of immortality."

The day of this mortal birth is not always an occasion for rejoicing. But, according to Sir Thomas Browne, "The first day of our Jubilee is Death."

The same festive ring is in Christina Rossetti's lines,—

"Glory touched glory on each blessed head,
Hands locked dear hands never to sunder more :
These were the new-begotten from the dead,
Whom the Great Birthday bore."

P. W. ROOSE.

LIFE INVISIBLE.

ABOUT our nest in these high boughs may whirl
Fierce winds of dread that never seem to cease,
But clamour night and day; yet all shall fail
To shatter Love's uncovenanted peace.

No voice have I to lift in ringing song
Of all the glories under heaven unfurled;
Yet who shall dare to say another hears
More clear than I the music of the world?

Rude hands may with the threshold lay our roof,
The ripening harvest of our fields destroy,
And steal our plenshing: but who shall find
Our love's invisible retreat of joy?

The garish jewels of the multitude
From fire or misadventure suffer scath:
Nor flood, nor flame, nor earthquake can deface
The tear-like gems of Love's unspoken faith.

And though the length of all the kingdom lie
Between us, other manners, other speech
Surround us as a web; who nearer dwell
Than thou and I, belovèd, each to each?

ELIZABETH GIBSON.

MASTER CASIMIR.

FROM THE GERMAN OF GEORGE HESEKIEL.

FROM time immemorial, it has been the custom of the youth of the place, and of the surrounding villages, to assemble in the open common before the Church of Carlepont, in Brittany, every "mid-Lent" after vespers.

The approaching couples of youths and maidens separate, greet their relatives, mingle with the throng, and scatter themselves hither and thither.

Finally begins, what far and wide is styled the "Carlepont-Betrothals." The old women make the first movements. Here one may be seen speaking softly with a young man, there another giving a sign to a maiden, a third whispering with a mother. Then they hold counsel together, and hastily impart their secrets. Finally each old woman seeks out her young man again, passes behind him, and, in so doing, carries off his hat, which she at once hands over to a young maiden. If the possessor of the hat then approaches the maiden, the latter replaces the article upon his head, takes his arm, and repairs with him to the dancing-saloon.

This is the old-time "Carlepont-Betrothals," and neither father nor mother has the courage to part, upon this day, a couple so united.

In the evening, however, the bridegroom* leads the bride from the dancing-hall to her house-door. If the parents grant him entrance, they virtually accept him as their future son-in-law. If, however, father or mother appear upon the threshold and deny him admission, he must consider it as a decided refusal, and must renounce the maiden.

Not a year passes by, that these "Betrothals" do not prove of service to some lovers in Carlepont and the surrounding villages. If a young couple love, and do not dare confess their love to their parents, they allow themselves first to be betrothed by the old women of Carlepont, at "mid-Lent," and afterwards learn, at least, what they have to hope or to fear. The "Carlepont-Betrothals" afford, therefore, the best medium for a young man to make a declaration of love, or offer of marriage, for without having spoken a word of love to the maiden, or a word of marriage to her family, he knows in the evening whether he is likely to be accepted or not. Nevertheless, in spite of the manifold hopes and fears of individuals, the festival is always a merry one—thanks to the old gossips, who, the betrothals

* In France and Germany bride and bridegroom are applied to betrothed couples.

completed, are accustomed to jest amongst one another, and play all manner of pranks upon the inquisitive. The custom is so general, that those who do not desire to be betrothed, come to the festival without hats, because this is the sole means of escape from the old women. These latter, however, dub every man who comes without a hat a coward, and wish him a proper cold in his head. Generally speaking, the fulfilment of this friendly wish is not rare.

Simon Quentin, Père, from Tracy-le-Val, with Madame Adelaide, his daintily-attired spouse, and Desirée, his pretty daughter, wended his way to Carlepont to be present at the "Betrothals." The young maiden walked with drooping head, at the side of her parent. Madame Adelaide noticed it, and turning to her husband, said: "Simon, look at our daughter, and tell me if she looks like a young girl who is being led to a festival? Can you explain to me her singular demeanour?"

"I reckon she is afraid that she will receive no hat at the 'Betrothals,'" replied Quentin; and turning to his daughter, he continued: "Listen, my child; if you would like to turn back, no one can prevent us from doing so!"

"Do not tease me!" besought the maiden. "I know very well that I am too young to receive a hat, and I assure you that I don't care!"

"But you are grown up," said the mother banteringly; "might not some old gossip take a notion to betroth you?"

"It doesn't matter to me," replied Desirée, with feigned indifference, yet involuntarily quickening her steps.

"What a shame!" cried Quentin suddenly, as he descried several maidens already on the arms of their betrothed; "we come too late—it is over."

In fact the betrothals were actually completed, and the indispensable jests had already begun.

One of the gossips had betrothed the aged mayor with a spruce dame from *Baillyans-Bois*. This little dame, with mocking air, took the arm of the venerable man and called him, with playful tenderness, her "little husband." This gave rise to jests without end, to which the old dignitary replied with great merriment, throwing all present into raptures.

"Good day, friend Quentin," said the gossip who had consummated the comic "betrothal"; "good day, Madame Adelaide; good day, my dear Desirée; shall I betroth you, too?"

"I am indebted to you," replied the young maiden saucily; "but I am not very fond of lending myself as a laughing-stock to others."

But the gossip, without heeding Desirée's words, looked around searchingly until she descried Simon's neighbour, Casimir Blanchard, who stood watching the scene with folded arms and sober countenance. Casimir was a proud, shy, and not very youthful bachelor, whom some time past they had ceased to betroth, as he had come to be looked upon as a decided enemy of marriage. Behind him now stole the

gossip, and skilfully made off with his hat, whilst he, with an air of extreme good-nature, set about seeking it.

"Casimir is seeking his hat," cried the bystanders in jubilant tones.

"Take care, he will be angry!" suggested some.

Blanchard did not find his hat.

"Here it is!" exclaimed one of the old women.

The old bachelor hastened forward, and stood before the charming Desirée Quentin. The maiden laughed outright, and the bystanders did not fail to join in with her merriment. Casimir alone did not laugh; but he had not the least notion to lose his temper, as he was expected to do.

"Stop," said the pretty little one; "they mean to make fun of you, my poor Casimir. There, take your hat again and never mind."

"Well, neighbour," added Simon, "do not be angry; neither my wife nor I have authorized them to entrap you."

"Am I then entrapped?" replied Casimir cheerfully. "On the contrary, they have provided me with a bride. I shall hold fast to her."

"Admirable, Blanchard," said Quentin. "There is no occasion to despise my daughter; so, then," he added, turning to Desirée, "after all you will not have to come home without a hat."

"It is truly laughable," replied the girl.

"Let us laugh over it," said Casimir, "and then let us dance."

"To be sure we must do that," replied Desirée, rejoiced at the thought of having an opportunity of going to the festival. "As long as the jest has arisen, it would be wrong to disturb it."

"I hope to see you soon again," said Casimir, turning to Quentin and his wife. "I think you will soon have occasion to open your door and not leave me standing without."

"Make your mind easy," replied Madame Adelaide, laughing heartily; "we will take time for consideration."

"One word, neighbour," added Quentin; "bring Desirée home betimes; do not listen to her if she will not come when you are ready."

"You may depend upon me," was Blanchard's rejoinder. "I am old enough to be discreet; and besides, my weary limbs will early enough call to mind your injunctions."

Whilst Simon and his wife quietly returned to Tracy-le-Val, Casimir, with Desirée on his arm, repaired to the best inn in Carlepont.

As Blanchard entered the inn, where all the betrothed were entertaining their brides, with the charming maiden hanging on his arm, all burst into loud laughter, and exclaimed: "Do you see Blanchard? They have betrothed him to little Quentin; that is truly laughable!"

Casimir took a table, had a fine white cloth spread upon it, and

ordered the waiter, in a loud tone, to bring the best dishes from the kitchen, and the best wines the host had in the cellar, for his little bride.

When the other young girls heard that, they began to think Casimir's demeanour was, after all, not so bad, and that this way of paying court was not so awkward.

After Desirée had helped herself, the old bachelor arose and went out.

Now the other girls exclaimed to Blanchard's betrothed "Do you know, my dear, that you are not to be pitied? Your bridegroom is very gallant."

"Elderly men always are," retorted the girl.

After about a quarter of an hour Casimir returned, bearing in his hand a great package of bon-bons tied with blue ribbons. As he handed the bon-bons to his bride, a revolution arose in the saloon. From all sides the peasant maidens flocked around Desirée, who, proud of Blanchard's attention, poured the bon-bons upon a plate and offered them to her friends.

"You ought to give your old man a kiss," said one of the young girls, taking a handful of bon-bons.

"Yes, yes," cried the others, "she must give him a kiss."

"No," replied the girl, "I have never kissed any man. I will not do it."

"Just imagine it is your father," counselled one of the girls, laughing.

The little one struggled violently as Casimir approached her.

"I forbid anyone, whoever it may be, to force this child to anything against her will," he said authoritatively; and turning to Desirée, he added, "If you do not wish to kiss me, you need not."

With much embarrassment the young girl replied, "I am ashamed to kiss you, Casimir; but if you want to kiss me I should not mind."

The laughter began anew. Casimir, however, seized the girl round the waist, and as she covered her face with her hands, to hide her confusion, kissed her repeatedly.

Trembling in the arms of her betrothed, it seemed to Desirée as though Casimir's kisses, the first she had ever received, burned into her heart.

"Now let us dance!" exclaimed the young girls.

"Let us dance!" repeated Casimir, still holding Desirée in his arms.

When they reached the dancing-hall, he said to the maiden, "Do you know, little witch, that you are leading me into something I have not thought of for ten years? But you are so dainty and nice, that I believe you could make St. Antonius himself fall in love with you."

This was the first flattery the young girl had ever received. From

the mouth of the wise Casimir, who had despised the prettiest girls of the canton, this praise seemed to her doubly flattering.

Desirée, never having danced before, was much embarrassed, because all eyes watched her so closely, but Casimir, who now remembered that he had formerly been an excellent dancer, showed her how she must comport herself. As he was tall and strong, he could easily lift the little one off her feet when she went astray, and laughingly set her down again in her place. The young girl did not make the least effort to conceal her delight. If her eyes met those of Casimir, or if she spoke to him, she always manifested the most complete satisfaction. Blanchard was thoroughly transformed. He who formerly had been gloomy and grave, now looked smilingly upon Desirée, feeling happy at the pleasure he was giving her. He was really not the same man. Desirée used to think him old, but at this moment, had she not remembered that Casimir had once been her mother's partner, she would have declared him younger than the youngest man present.

During the whole evening Blanchard was remarkably attentive to the young girl, who, on her part, displayed the greatest obligations for his thoughtfulness. When, in her mind, she compared Casimir with the other betrothed, she would ask herself how she could ever become accustomed to the uncouth manners of the other young people who danced around her.

About eight o'clock, the first couple left the dancing-hall, and Casimir gently reminded the little one that it would be wise to follow their example. Desirée gave immediate ear to his suggestion, and since she was not a little weary, she readily consented to be led home without delay.

When Casimir and Desirée had turned their backs upon Carlepont, they observed for the first time that the night was dark. At this moment it occurred to the young maiden that it were far better to walk by the side of a mature man than of a light young fellow.

"If I were not with you," she said to Blanchard, "I should be afraid."

"Make your mind easy, the moon will soon rise," replied the latter. "I myself feel afraid, but of the night air, not of the darkness; for as you are heated from dancing, I fear the dampness may harm you; let us walk faster."

"Not quite so fast, dear Casimir. I am very tired."

"Why did you not tell me that before? I should have taken the landlord's wagon, and driven you home. It is not too late now; we can turn back."

"Thank you, Casimir; I can easily walk as far as Tracy. I will not be the cause of your unnecessarily wasting your money. People have always said you were very close, though, upon my word, I have seen nothing of it."

"I am close with people who bore me; that is why they consider

me miserly ; but I find real satisfaction in lavishing my money upon those who please me."

"Indeed, Casimir, I had never considered you so amiable."

"I am not always so."

"You have been so to-day."

"Perhaps towards you, for you please me. If you only knew how I like to look at your pretty little face ! More than once I have told your father that I repent having never married, when I think I might have had a daughter in my house like you."

"Why have you never married, Casimir?"

"You ask a confidence of me that I have never given to anyone."

"Then give it to me ; I am curious, but not the least inclined to gossip."

"If it were the history of a misfortune, I should relate it to you at once ; but it is quite the contrary, and I am afraid you would only laugh at me."

"I should never laugh at your distress, even if it did sound funny," replied Desirée ; at the same time, however, she uttered a cry of terror. The moon had abruptly emerged from behind a cloud, casting upon their pathway the gloomy shadows of the trees, which Desirée, who was not over-courageous, had taken for a company of ghosts.

Instinctively she closed her eyes ; and when she opened them again, all around her was plunged into the deepest obscurity once more.

"Do you believe the moon will rise, Casimir?" she asked tremblingly.

"Certainly ; when it has passed from behind those clouds, you will see its calm face to your heart's content."

"I shall be glad of that," replied the young girl ; "for when it is dark I don't like to listen to stories."

"You are a little coward !" responded Casimir, seizing one of Desirée's hands, which he then continued to hold fast within his own.

Finally, a clear, mild light was shed around them.

"Now commence ; I can listen," said Desirée, drawing a long breath.

"The people in Tracy and the neighbouring country believe me to be an enemy to marriage," began Casimir ; "and they are mistaken. Many would be astonished were they to hear me say that it has always been my dearest wish to have a wife. When I was still young, I fancied there would be no difficulty in finding as many brides as one pleased. With such ideas, I never took pains to win a maiden for myself ; therefore, after a considerable time, I came to be looked upon as a marriage-hater, and the girls ceased to waste their friendliness upon me, for they considered it useless. I finally began to comprehend that to be able to marry, one must seek out a wife,

and I began to ask myself whom I should choose. But all the girls I could have liked were already betrothed to men who had understood matters better than I. This discouraged me, and finally I had to confess to myself that I had become too old to lay claims to girls who were not yet betrothed. Since the death of my mother, I have led a dreary life; nevertheless, I bear my lot patiently, for it cannot be altered."

"You should be content with a maiden lady of your own age, or with a widow, and so end your distress."

"Very fine. The strangest part of the story, though, is, that I neither want a maiden lady nor a widow. In my heart dwells as much love as any young man could have, and I wish a young girl, or none at all. Since I have no opportunity to win such a one, I don't see why I should attempt to console myself by taking a widow or maiden lady whom I don't want. If I am wrong, the more I suffer the worse for me!"

"I assure you that your history is not at all laughable," replied Desirée musingly.

"You are the noblest maiden in the world," said Blanchard, deeply touched; "if I am less cross-grained to-day than usual, it is your doing, and I am proud of it."

When the two finally reached Simon Quentin's door, she knocked away right merrily.

"Who is there?" cried Madame Adelaide from within.

"The betrothed."

"Come in, come in!" cried Quentin and his wife in one breath.

Followed by Casimir, Desirée entered.

"Here you are, comrade!" cried Quentin to his friend Blanchard.

"Have you taken the stiffness out of your old bones? And you, little one, have you enjoyed yourself?"

"Ah, to be sure!" replied the girl. "You have no idea how attentive Casimir has been to me; he went so far, he made the other betrothed envious."

"Casimir is a fine fellow," said Madame Adelaide, tapping Blanchard familiarly upon the shoulder; "he always used to be; and whenever any of our beaux were away, we would always rather have him than anyone else."

"I have always been very lucky," replied the old bachelor ambiguously, looking meanwhile at Desirée in such a manner that she could not help laughing aloud.

"What are you laughing at?" remarked Simon. "At all events, to-day you made a great sacrifice of yourself."

"I assure you the sacrifice was not very great. It gave me great pleasure to see the maiden so lively. Although I am not a little weary, I still feel that I should be happy to take Desirée every Sunday to the dance, if she would like to go."

"Old friend," cried Quentin abruptly, "that is a glorious notion

of yours ; if you would carry it out, it would be a great favour to us, for, through your kind offer, Desirée will not need to look out for a partner, and there will be no danger of her finding one who could be displeasing to us."

"Yes, yes," cried Casimir, with a constrained laugh, "I should not be displeased if I could protect the little one from folly."

"She is, besides, half and half your daughter," added Simon.

"So she is," said Madame Quentin, laughing. "He was present in person when she was christened, and he has seen her grow up under his own eyes."

When Casimir had gone, Quentin turned to his wife.

"Such a respectable, honest, well-to-do man, of good family. What a shame he is not ten years younger !"

"How old is he, then ?" asked Desirée, with apparent indifference.

"Thirty-eight years, at least !"

"Thirty-eight years—is that very old ?"

"But, child," exclaimed Madame Adelaide, "that is nearly forty !"

From the following Sunday forth, Desirée was really waited upon by Blanchard to all the dances ; he himself started new amusements, and the young people of Tracy were willing to admit that they had never before had so much fun. Fathers and mothers, rendered easy by the presence of the old bachelor, allowed their daughters to go wherever he was. The young people, on their part, took great care to be polite to Desirée, in order not to offend Casimir and so lose him. The young girl's friends constantly reiterated :

"Do not become engaged to be married too soon, for whenever you are engaged, farewell to Casimir, farewell, ye *fêtes*, and farewell to freedom."

"Make your minds easy," the pretty little one would reply decorously ; "I know that my parents would not so easily give me up to any young fellow."

If Casimir had been frank, not a young man in the village could have boasted of being more in love than he. When they saw him so cheerful and contented, no one suspected anything of the sadness and restlessness that grew stronger upon him after every festival.

When he was alone he sighed constantly. Yes, the enamoured old swain even shed tears. Often he would stand looking at himself in the glass, and say, "Truly a fine specimen of a lover. I have certainly lost my senses."

Simon Quentin's daughter, on her part, had become the most reserved maiden in the world, and never seemed to think of choosing a husband for herself. Her parents, therefore, could form marriage schemes to their heart's content ; Desirée never thought of opposing them. "I will marry whatever man you choose to select for me," she said often, "for I have no preference for any young fellow of the village or vicinity."

Therefore, one day, upon Simon Quentin's return from a visit to his sister in Qurscamp, he said to Desirée :

"Now I have found a husband for you, my child. Your cousin has obtained a lucrative position on the railroad, and in a day or two will leave Compiègne ; your aunt and I have determined it will be best to have you married as soon as possible, because my sister thinks a young man without a wife is easily ruined in a city. To prevent this we will betroth you next mid-Lent."

As an obedient daughter, Desirée permitted herself to make no opposition ; but her cheerfulness was gone, and every time father or mother inquired into the cause of her trouble, she would simply assert that she dreaded marriage.

Upon the evening before mid-Lent, old Quentin, who, hitherto, had been unable to draw a word from his daughter in reference to her cousin, said sternly :

"Listen, Desirée ; this cannot go on much longer. What is disagreeable to you in this marriage ? Had I known you to love anyone else, I should have made no promises for you ; but you do not love anyone. I believe we can run no risk in using a little constraint with you. Your cousin is a handsome man who knows the world ; you will be proud of him and come to love him very much."

"No one, to hear you, dear father, would imagine that I am your only child," responded Desirée sorrowfully. "You know that I must leave you if I marry my cousin, and yet this does not prevent you from hastening this marriage. Very well, I love you better than you love me, and know that I cannot be happy away from you. Besides, I am still so young that no one can wonder if I have no desire to marry."

"Child," replied Quentin, "we have granted you many privileges ; you don't want to work and keep house, that is all. Depend upon it, though, if you reject your cousin, I shall forbid you at once to go to the dancing-hall, and then you will not have gained much by your obstinacy."

"Really, it would not grieve me much to give up dancing," replied the young girl, with tears in her eyes.

"But, tell us then what ails you !" cried the mother.

"I will not go to the 'betrothals' !" replied Desirée sobbing.

"These are mere whims, and it is high time to put an end to such childish follies," stormed Father Simon ; "we have found a suitable bridegroom for you, and so sure as my name is Quentin, I will marry you to him !"

"I shall obey you, father," said the weeping girl ; "but you will have made me unhappy for my whole life."

"Heyday !" replied Simon, already mollified, "you will never make me believe that you can't bear a man like your cousin. Do you know that he is doing you a great honour to sue for the hand of a country girl like you, when he might have a city girl ?"

"I could very readily dispense with this honour. I find my cousin too handsome and too proud for a country girl, and really, if I should love him, I should be the most to be pitied."

"What nonsense are you talking?" asked Simon, who no longer paid heed to his daughter.

"I believe," continued the young maiden, "that I should prefer a less handsome, less young, and less proud man; for, according to my views of marriage, it does not suffice to love, but one must also be sure of being loved."

"You may talk over your views with your cousin," said Madame Adelaide, not in the least comprehending her daughter; "he is wiser than we. I cannot make out what you are prattling about. But I agree with your father that prudent parents would not be influenced by such childish nonsense."

Desirée bowed her head and was silent. Some moments later she went out, ostensibly to visit a neighbour's daughter.

After she had closed the door behind her, Madame Adelaide said to her husband:

"If Desirée were not so obedient, she might cause us no little trouble, for she has ideas in her head that are not natural."

"The best thing," remarked Father Simon, "will be to have her married as soon as possible; it is hard to do anything with the young folks of the present day."

Casimir Blanchard would have given something if the year of his "betrothal" with Desirée could have endured for ever; but he saw the May-flowers give way to the strawberries earlier than usual, he saw the nuts grow riper from day to day, and the long evenings vanish with unwonted rapidity. The days hastened away with wings of speed, so that he no longer thought of counting them. When the evening before mid-Lent had come, he seated himself sorrowfully at his fireside, thinking of the following day, which would destroy his last dream.

"She will never know that I love her, the sweet child," he thought. "If she knew how much I have suffered whilst I was seeking to amuse her, she would perhaps take pity upon me." Suddenly he heard a rustling in his little garden without. He rose quickly. The house-door was opened, and Desirée appeared upon the threshold.

"Casimir," she said entreatingly, "come here quickly; I must speak with you."

"Come in, then; it is cold out there, and it is easier to chat by the fireside."

"No," replied the girl, "that will not do."

Now Casimir quickly followed her out.

"What have you to say to me, little one?"

In a low tone the maiden asked: "Are you going to-morrow to the 'betrothals?'"

Casimir trembled, and losing his usual self-control, he said, "It would pain me too grievously were I compelled to see you on the arm of another; I shall therefore not go to the 'betrothals.'"

"Come, though; oh, do come!" entreated the young girl. "If you are not there, I must allow myself to be betrothed to my cousin, whom I do not love. I am afraid of my father when he scolds, but with you I am afraid of nothing."

"Then I shall come, and will find a way of preventing your being betrothed to a man who does not please you."

"He does not displease me; on the contrary, I find him too handsome for me."

"How is that?" asked Blanchard.

"Do you see, Casimir, I have thoughts which are unlike the thoughts of others, and I cannot explain them. If I were to speak of them to my father or my mother, they would laugh at me."

"What kind of thoughts have you, then, dear, good Desirée?" asked Casimir, drawing the young girl towards him, "Tell your old friend; he will try to understand you."

Desirée leaned her head upon his breast. She heard his heart beat violently, and grew so confused that her own heart began to beat in the same manner.

"I want my future husband to love me beyond all else in the world."

"Oh, if that would suffice, I should say I love you beyond all else in the world, passionately; so much, that if you were away from me I should lose the remnant of reason I have yet left. Do not laugh at old Casimir, little one, he is too wretched. Besides, for this one evening you are still his betrothed. Let him say to you that he loves you as no other will love you again. Rest a moment upon his heart that the remembrance of having pressed you in his arms may remain to him. Ah! if your sweet lips could only frame a falsehood, if you would make your friend happy a minute, you would tell him just once that you love him."

"I love you," whispered the young maiden, in so deeply moved a voice that it was scarcely audible.

"Thanks—oh, thanks!"

And a tear fell upon Desirée's brow.

"Casimir, are you crying?" exclaimed the maiden.

"Oh, why am I so old?" he cried, in a heart-rending tone.

"Casimir," said Desirée, "I did not tell a lie when I said I loved you. I do love you—but, although I can say so to you, I should never have courage to acknowledge it to my father, and if you do not defend me, I shall be compelled to marry my cousin."

Casimir was a man; he knew that one can do much if one will, so he said, with great resolution, "After all that you have said to me, I am capable of venturing upon anything; refusals, insults, threats, nothing shall intimidate me. I have not waited so long for the love

of a young maiden, to allow it to be snatched from me at once. I swear to you, in six months you shall be my wife."

"To-morrow, then, my Casimir," whispered Desirée, soothed by her friend's assurance.

"To-morrow," replied Blanchard, "and we shall see which of us two, your cousin or I, shall be victorious where you are the prize."

Upon the morning of "mid-Lent," when Desirée began to adorn herself for the festival, Simon and his wife no longer doubted her obedience, although she looked doubly pale, and spoke no word on the way.

Arrived at the commons, she descried Casimir at once; full of unrest, her eyes sought her cousin, but she did not see him. The mother of the young railroad official came alone towards her brother.

"And your son?" inquired the latter.

"His duties prevented him from coming early this morning to Qurscamp."

"I should have thought," said Madame Adelaide, somewhat offended, "that upon such an occasion he might have obtained leave of absence."

"It was not possible; besides, we need not fret about it; surely we can betroth our children without the aid of the old gossips here. In addition to this, they are both so young that we could easily postpone the matter until next year."

"That is what I told my father last evening," said Desirée, putting in her voice.

"Well, then, there is nothing lost," said Simon's sister, in cheerful mood.

"We might have been told of this before," replied Madame Adelaide drily, "and not have been compelled to take this long walk for nothing."

Simon said not a word; he thought exactly as his wife.

The aunt, who knew her sister-in-law well, did not consider the moment propitious to defend her son, so she embraced her niece and hastened away.

At the moment when Quentin was about turning to go home, a hat was brought to his daughter.

Tremblingly, Desirée accepted it.

"What is the meaning of that?" asked Quentin sternly.

"Very little," replied Blanchard, in a firm voice. "I saw that Desirée had no betrothed, and therefore I thought I would assume the position as last year."

"Give him back his hat," commanded Simon; "the jest has endured long enough."

Without heeding Quentin's observation, Casimir offered the young girl his arm, and in her anxiety she allowed herself to be led away without looking around.

"I forbid you to go with him!" shrieked Simon.

"I have consummated this 'betrothal,' and forbid you to dissolve

it." With these words one of the gossips approached the enraged father, with all the solemnity of the popular custom, and all present were on her side.

Simon and his wife did not venture to resist, and returned in anger to Tracy-le-Val.

Desirée never thought of celebrating the "betrothal" with dancing, as upon the preceding year. Casimir led her to an inn, where there was no dancing; and then, after partaking of the refreshments, the two, notwithstanding the cold, walked through the woods the whole afternoon.

Blanchard was full of caution. During the night he had weighed every possible contingency, and he believed he might look forward to some hope.

In the evening, the "betrothed" returned early to Tracy-le-Val, that they might learn their fate as soon as possible.

The nearer she approached her father's house, the more anxious grew Desirée. Casimir, however, seemed in this emergency, for the first time, fully himself.

Arrived at the door, Blanchard knocked, and said as usual, "The betrothed are here."

Desirée, for whom the excitement of the day had proved too much, fainted, and fell over into Casimir's arms.

"Open, open!" screamed the latter, in a suffocating voice.

Adelaide and Simon stepped out to cut off his entrance; but Blanchard, bearing Desirée, rushed into the house. When the parents descried their daughter, with closed eyes and pale as death, they forgot everything.

"Wake up, my child!" cried Simon.

The mother ran to and fro as though she had lost her reason, and at the maiden's feet whispered Casimir, "Do not deny me, Desirée do not deny me!"

Finally she opened her eyes. When she descried Casimir, a sudden blush overspread her lovely face.

"Since he has entered," said she, "do not send him forth, I beg you from my heart!"

"You love him?" exclaimed Simon and his wife in one breath.

"Yes, I love him; and he loves me beyond all else; that was what I desired."

"Did you teach her that?" asked Simon.

"I never knew that she loved me until last evening," said Casimir; "but so soon as I knew it, I swore that she should be my wife."

"You will let us marry, will you not, my father?" asked the young maiden. "I will then not have to leave you, and will be very happy."

"It was not right for you to sacrifice yourself out of love for us," said Simon, who was touched by this last sentence, which he took for the grounds of her whole conduct.

"The girl has attained what she desired," replied Madame Adelaide, finally beginning to comprehend her daughter's feelings.

THE HIDDENNESS OF PERFECT THINGS.

"THE hiddenness of perfect things." The phrase is Mr. Walter Pater's, not mine; but it was a happy moment when I lighted upon it, for, of a sudden, a note was struck that formed a key-note to some haunting sounds; in it I had found the power of striking in one chord stray thoughts that had wanted just that to bring them into harmony.

The hiddenness of perfect things is one of those "thoughts beyond our thoughts" that haunts all our dreams of Heaven and our days of earth, shining like a star through the night, lighting dark places with the beacon of hope. That "shrinking mysticism, a sentiment of diffidence like that expressed in Psyche's so tremulous hope . . . the fatality which seems to haunt any signal beauty, whether moral or physical, as if it were in itself something illicit and isolating," is a very real apprehension in all solemn moments of the soul.

In the beauty of an exalted conception, whether ideal or matter of fact—a beautiful form, a beautiful view, a beautiful idea—in each and all that approaches perfection, there is ever the lingering and regretful suspicion of secrecy; the recognition of some hidden quality we may not know; and the nearer we draw to that which is perfect the more unsearchable the vault whereon we gaze.

Round about all we hold most high, most good, most dear, the silence is profound. Beyond the confines of the mind it lies, mystic, unspeakable, hovering over dark fields of faith, flickering across wide deserts of hope.

" Even the winds disturb not as they go,
The boughs of those long larches, bending low
Where the marsh-water lies,
In which Its vacant eyes
Gaze at themselves unceasing, stubbornly,
Only sometimes, as on their way they move,
The noiseless shadows of the clouds above,
Or of some great bird's hovering flight on high,
Brush It in passing by."

How groping are our thoughts of God. How darkly are the profundities of that mysterious nature hid from the glance of human eyes, and how high above the most enraptured gaze of prophet and of seer are the hiding-places of His glory! How mute for the most part the voices of creation and providence, how little knowledge reaches us from the vast store-houses of omniscience; even the messengers that come to guide our steps are for the most part invisible, and the golden seal of silence has been set upon their lips. Who shall sound the depths of love or comprehend one little part of

its fulness? Friendship, affection, passion, the very terms of love are bald and bare, because we know not what it is we would express when we experience its sorrow and its joy; the very conditions which give birth to this perfect thing are darkly hidden.

Open up the vault where truth and honour, faith and hope, all the highest qualities of the mind are hid, will they divulge their secrets at our bidding? "Who can deny," says Swedenborg, "that the interior operations of God with man are myriads of myriads of which man knows nothing."

And what of the mystery of life? Surely that is a perfect thing, yet how inscrutable. The hidden mysteries of the seed in the fruit, containing such boundless possibilities of growth and achievement because it lives, how carefully concealed! How little to be understood is the perfection of sacrifice: above all, that full, perfect and sufficient Sacrifice for the sins of the world wherein lies our hope of immortality.

Truly the hiddenness of some perfect things is indisputable. And if it be so, may not the converse also be true, the perfectness of other hidden things?

How imperfect all that lies open to our reading. Go to extremes and consider the contempt with which we view those things which are too openly displayed. What a world of reproach lies in that word "advertisement"; it is the very signal of inferiority when applied to talent, good works, or anything that is really gifted and endowed. The worship of externals is the first thing to be subordinated when once the more serious realities of life are grasped, even the externals of religion are of minor importance to the truths they represent. The whole tendency of culture, whether religious or intellectual, is to set in relief the value of inwardness against the worthlessness of outwardness. There is nothing perfect which is as yet made fully clear, though the promise is sure that there is nothing perfect which shall not be revealed.

And yet knowing the hiddenness of some perfect things, and distrusting the imperfection of visible things, we tremble and misdoubt when we stand upon the brink of some other dark places. Mystery is ever beshadowed with the chill presence of fear; it is ever the hiddenness of many things which most affrights us. The lost places of the Past, the empty spaces of the Future, the dread voids of Darkness, the unknown of the Hereafter, the dark secrets of Death—how starless the sky, eclipsed sun and moon, when we look at these. Especially in death dwells the appalling quiet of The Silence.

"Of those who cross its vast immensity,
Whether at twilight or at dawn it be,
There is not one but knows
The dread of the unknown that It instils;
An ample force supreme It holds its sway,
Uninterruptedly the same for aye.

The Hiddenness of Perfect Things.

Dark walls of blackest fir-trees bar from sight
The outlook towards the paths of hope and light ;
Great pensive junipers
Affright from far the passing travellers ;
Long narrow paths stretch their long lines unbent,
Till they fork off in curves malevolent ;
And the sun ever shifting, ceaseless lends
Fresh aspect to the mirage whither tends
Bewilderment."

Yet it may be after all that even in these dark places very much of mystery is but the hiddenness of perfect things ; that in their very secrecy lies the promise of perfection. Is it not quite possible that—to use a familiar phrase—we know the worst : that our own imperfections are as yet too great to enable us to know the best or to grasp by any other link than that of faith the treasures of good things that are in store ? Mystery is the silence of God, let us try to think that it is more golden even than His speech, and that in the very stillness of its mute marvels lies the earnest of the perfect possession, warrant for hope in the promise, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard . . . the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

F. A. FULCHER.



